

Film Program

A selection of 11 films taken from films submitted from 19 countries.

The Audience Award will be given to the film that receives the most votes by members of the audience.

Selections from Film Entries



Bent Director: Martina Bell

2020/USA/American Sign Language, English/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/2 mins/Suspense/International premiere

A deaf college professor setting out his irregular behavior in his car, must confront his moral decision.

Selected Film A

Mister Michel Director: Julien Bourges

2018/France/French Sign Language, French/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/17 mins/Human Drama/Asia premiere

Taken from a true story in France, a nurse visits a retired patient, who sits watching television in his home. However, she discovers that he is the victim of a terrible misjustice.

Selected Film A

The Word Factory Director: Alexander Laferriere

2019/USA/American Sign Language, English/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/18 mins/Romantic comedy/International premiere

Working at a factory that makes words, a man falls in love with a woman he can only see through a glass window.

Selected Film A

No choice Director: Hrysto

2021/France/French Sign Language, French/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/59 mins/Suspense/World premiere

Hugo is a cabaret drag queen at "Chez Titi". With his sister Victoria, his faithful friend Matt, and all the regulars of the famous cabaret at hand, Hugo takes to the stage for his latest number. Shortly afterwards, a shocking murder is discovered.

Selected Film A

Quieter is louder Director: Kathleen Rae Gonzales

2019/Philippines/American Sign Language/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/8 mins/Human drama/International premiere

With a grim expression and a backpack on his back, a Deaf boy heads to school. But underneath, he struggles with a dilemma in his heart.

Selected Film B

The Train Between Us Director: Hasna Mufidah, Mayang Irsan

2019/Indonesia/Indonesian Sign Language, Indonesian/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/10 mins/Romance/Japan premiere

A Deaf young man, has just gone through a painful breakup with his Hearing girlfriend. However, old memories are sparked when he meets her again on a train platform. The Train in Between Us tells the story of the struggles of a relationship between the two world of the Deaf and Hearing.

Selected Film B

Love X Bites Director: Yupar Momo, M. Noe

2020/Myanmar/Burmese/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/17 mins/Romance/Japan premiere During the Covid-19 outbreak, two women quarantine at a hotel and share a room. One is deaf. They communicate through text messages and body gestures. Soon, sexual tensions flare up and they find themselves unexpectedly in a passionate affair. Rated R-15 *Not available to those under the age of 15.

Selected Film B

Scarlet Director: Mirko Scheit, Tobias Lehmann

2020/Germany/German Sign Language/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/14 mins/Horror comedy/Asia premiere

Chris and Mary are in an unhappy relationship. In an effort to reignite their previous intimacy, Chris makes a special online order one evening. However, it is the beginning of a descent into nightmare. The combination of eroticism and horror takes the audience on an eclectic journey somewhere in between reality and dreams. Rated R-15 *Not available to those under the age of 15.

Selected Film B

image Director: Billy Jake Cortez

2019/Philippines/Tagalog, English, American Sign Language, Filipino Sign Language/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/8 mins/Experimental/World premiere

Sophie, a young deaf painter goes online live and takes back her self with her paintings with deep meaning on them. Rated R-15 *Not available to those under the age of 15.

Selected Film B

A Sonic Pulse Director: Antoine Marinot, Dorothy Allen-Pickard

2019/UK/British Sign Language, English/Japanese subtitles/English subtitles/7 mins/Documentary/Asia premiere

A Sonic Pulse explores D/deaf people's experience of electronic music from a visceral, communal and scientific perspective.

meaning on them. Rated R-15 *Not available to those under the age of 15.

Selected Film B

Me, a Homeland within the HOMELAND Director: Ahmed Al-Samman

2021/Egypt/Arabic/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/7 mins/Human drama/Asia premiere

A man commits a crime and is detained at a police station. Under interrogation from detectives, he opens up about his life.

Selected Film B

In-person

Selected Film A 12/4 (Saturday) 17:35

Selected Film B 12/5 (Sunday) 18:45

※ Advance tickets ¥800, Same-day tickets ¥1000

Online : limited to Japan

1st screening: 12/4 (Saturday) 10:30 JST (available for 72 h)

2nd screening: 12/7 (Tuesday) 21:00 JST (available for 72 h)

3rd screening: 12/8 (Wednesday) 17:00 JST (available for 72h)

Online streaming : worldwide

Selected Film Director - Interview Online talk

※The streaming URL will be announced on the festival site.

Only I Can Hear

Director: Itaru Matsui
2021/Japan/American Sign Language, English, Japanese Sign Language, Japanese/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/53 mins/Preliminary screening/In-person



CODA(Children Of Deaf Adults) are children born to Deaf parents. who experience the world of deafness at home, but the hearing world outside. It is a stressful situation when people outside regard them as “children of disabled people”, however, they do not feel that they fit in the Deaf world either because they can hear. This film, the first feature-length documentary to cover CODA in the United States, follows three 15 year old CODA and how they find their path over the course of three years. Through depicting the formation of self identities during this impressionable time in their lives, it reveals to us the unknown world of CODAs. Won TOKYODOCS 2016 Grand Prize, Presented at HOTDOCS2021.

In-person 12/5 (Sunday) 14:30
Itaru Matsui (Director) - Meet and Greet

※Advance tickets ¥1500, Same day tickets ¥1700

The Silent Forest

Director: Chen-Nien Ko
2020/Taiwan/Taiwan Sign Language, Taiwanese/English subtitles, Japanese subtitles/ 104 mins/Preliminary screening/In-person



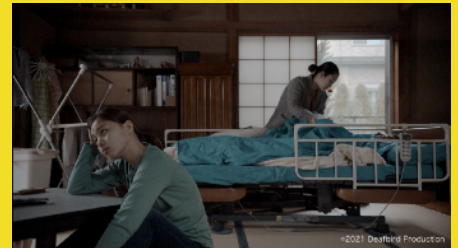
Transferring to a deaf school, a young boy witnesses a girl being sexually assaulted by multiple schoolboys on a school bus. Though shocked, he is told by the lead perpetrator that what he saw was simply a “game”. The film is Chen-Nien’s directorial debut, and is based on an actual incident that happened in Taiwan. Nominated for 8 categories at the 2020 Golden Horse Film Festival and Awards, won Best New Actor Award, Best Sound Award, and nominated for the 2021 Taiwan Film Critics Association Award.

In-person 12/4 (Saturday) 12:30
Mitsuo Itabashi (Actor) - Commentary

※Advance tickets ¥1500, Same day tickets ¥1700

The Tanaka's

Director: Eri Makihara
2021/Japan/Silent/Japanese Sign Language/ English subtitles, Japanese subtitles/60 mins/World premiere/In-person



In a house located in a corner of Tokyo, Mai Tanaka and her sister, Miho, live together with Miho’s husband, Keisuke. In her repetitive daily life, Mai is asked by her family repeatedly, “What are you going to do from now on?” The film depicts the absurdity of the family in a silent 60 minutes. Co-director of “Listen”, a film that questions what is the “music” of the Deaf, Eri Mahikara captures the complexity of this world in this follow up drama. Produced as part of Training, Sign Language & Art Project.

In-person 12/4 (Saturday) 15:25
Eri Makihara (Director), and cast members - Meet and Greet

※Advance tickets ¥1300, Same day tickets ¥1500

Ginger & Honey Milk

Director: Mika Imai
2021/Japan/Japanese Sign Language, Japanese/ English subtitles, Japanese subtitles/60 mins/World premiere/In-person



“Maybe I’m gay” says Kento as they comes out to their friend, Rei. Amid a Covid-19 state of emergency imposed in April 2020, this human drama traces the lives of four university students, both Deaf and hearing. Their joys and sorrows intersect in a complex four way relationship. This is the long-awaited new work by the director of “Until Rainbow Dawn followed”I Produced as part of Training, Sign Language & Art Project.

In-person 12/5 (Sunday) 16:35
Mika Imai (Director), and cast members - Meet and Greet

※Advance tickets ¥1300, Same day tickets ¥1500

Old Long Stay

Director: Yuki Iiyama
2020/Japan/Japanese Sign Language, Japanese/ Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/170 mins/In-person, online streaming worldwide



Despite being born and raised in Japan, having paid taxes, and naturalized, they are not able to receive the minimum guaranteed pension. In March 2000, seven Deaf Zainichi-Koreans file suit in the Kyoto District Court protesting unreasonable discrimination that foreign nationals above a certain age and who have a disability are not able to receive disability pensions. Through interviews with the plaintiff and supporters, and past documentaries, the director brings us face to face with historical and political issues of “disability” and “ethnicity”. Produced and screened at Yokohama Triennale 2020.

In-person 12/5 (Sunday) 10:30
Yuki Iiyama (Director) - Meet and Greet

Online : worldwide
1st screening: 12/4 (Saturday) 10:30 JST(available for 72 h)
2nd screening: 12/7 (Tuesday) 21:00 JST (available for 72 h)
3rd screening: 12/9 (Thursday) 20:00 JST (available for 72 h)

※ Advance tickets ¥1500, Same-day tickets ¥1700

BORI

Director: Kim Jinyu
2018/South Korea/Korean Sign Language, Korean/ Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/110 mins/Asia premiere/Online streaming limited to Japan



“I wanted to be a Deaf person.” - such is what Bori ponders. Bori, an 11 year old girl, lives with her family in a seaside town. However, of the four family members, only she is hearing and the rest are deaf. Though she’s accustomed to speaking to her friends at school, she struggles to tell her family about her school day, and finds herself in this dilemma. Eventually, she wonders why she is the only one who is different, and encounters feelings of loneliness. Won the 23rd Busan International Film Festival Directors Guild of Korea Award, 24th German Schlingel International Film Festival Audience Award & Chemnitz Award, and featured in various domestic and overseas film festivals. The film is a story of the emotions and love for family from a CODA perspective.

Online : limited to Japan
1st screening: 12/4 (Saturday) 10:30 JST (available for 72 h)
2nd screening: 12/7 (Tuesday) 21:00 JST (available for 72 h)
3rd screening: 12/9 (Thursday) 20:00 JST (available for 72 h)

※ Advance tickets ¥1500, Same-day tickets ¥1700
※ Tickets available in limited quantities; distribution will conclude when the capacity is reached.

Feeling Through

Director: Doug Roland
2019/USA/American Sign Language, English/
Japanese subtitles, English subtitles, Japanese
audio guide/19 mins/Japan premiere/In-person,
online streaming worldwide



While walking through the streets of New York after a party, a young boy has a chance encounter with DeafBlind man asking for help. The two end up sticking together through the night and an unexpected friendship develops. Nominated for the 2021 Academy Award for Best Short Film, Marlee Matlin, a Deaf actor who was cast as the leading role in "Children of a Lesser God", is executive producer.

This is Normal

Director: Ryan Welsh, Justin Giddings
2013/USA/American Sign Language, English/
Japanese subtitles, English subtitles, Japanese
audio guide/20 mins/In-person, online streaming
worldwide



Growing up surrounded by hearing people, a young woman, who can't hear, struggles to fit into the Deaf community. However, the film's exploration of what is "normal" will find both supporters and detractors in the audience. Adopting or rejecting the Deaf identity and the conflict between, this short drama explores her search for an identity to call her own.

Double Discrimination

Director: Rinkoo Barpaga
2014/United Kingdom/British Sign Language/
Japanese subtitles, English subtitles, Japanese
audio guide/27 mins/In-person, online streaming
worldwide



Deaf director, Rinkoo, who is Asian, interviews members of the Deaf community about their experience with racism. Black and Asian Deaf people say they are targets of racism, whereas white Deaf people say they have not seen such racism. This short documentary confronts the hierarchy that exists in Deaf society.

In-person 12/4 (Saturday) 10:30 To be screened after the opening ceremony, Audio guide screening

Online : worldwide

1st screening: 12/4 (Saturday) 10:30 JST (available for 72 h) 2nd screening: 12/7 (Tuesday) 21:00 JST (available for 72 h) 3rd screening: 12/9 (Thursday) 20:00 JST (available for 72 h)

※ Advance tickets ¥1300, Same-day tickets ¥1500

【Special Feature on Deaf Directors】

5 films selections capture the complexity of the world from a Deaf perspective. From the unique eyes of the Deaf, we explore this world.

I quit, being "friends"

Director: Ayako Imamura
2020/Japan/Japanese Sign Language, Japanese/
English subtitles, Japanese subtitles/84 mins/Online
streaming worldwide



Due to Asperger's, Ma-chan finds it tiring to be perceptive to other people's feelings and finds it hard to deal with people. Director Ayako Imamura, who is born deaf, shows an understanding face, but is inwardly conflicted. When the relationship between the two becomes strained over trivial things, the camera is turned, the director being worried over who bears responsibility for the problem. Screened at Aichi International Women's Film Festival and Nippon Connection Film Festival, Germany.

Online : worldwide

1st screening: 12/4 (Saturday) 10:30 JST (available for 72 h)
2nd screening: 12/7 (Tuesday) 21:00 JST (available for 72 h)
3rd screening: 12/9 (Thursday) 20:00 JST (available for 72 h)

※ Advance tickets ¥1000, Same-day tickets ¥1200

Silence on that Day

Director: Ayako Imamura
2021/Japan/Japanese Sign Language, Japanese/
English subtitles, Japanese subtitles/116 mins/Online
streaming worldwide



Nearly 10 years has passed since the documentary, "The Connecting Bridge", was announced in 2013 about Deaf people and the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami. Immediately after the earthquake occurred, Director Ayako Imamura, visiting Miyagi prefecture, was determined to let people know about the situation of Deaf people living there. Since then, she has continued to visit Miyagi prefecture as well as other areas affected by natural disasters such as the Kumamoto earthquake, West Japan flooding, and more recently, the Covid-19 pandemic to record the plight of the Deaf, and intends to do so until the day that everyone can live safely. This film is a 10 year record of the Deaf and how they cope with natural disasters.

Online : worldwide

1st screening: 12/4 (Saturday) 10:30 JST (available for 72 h)
2nd screening: 12/7 (Tuesday) 21:00 JST (available for 72 h)
3rd screening: 12/9 (Thursday) 20:00 JST (available for 72 h)

※ Advance tickets ¥1000, Same-day tickets ¥1200

Until Rainbow Dawn followed

Director: Mika Imai
2018/Japan/Japanese Sign Language, Japanese/
English subtitles, Japanese subtitles/63 mins/Online
streaming worldwide



Hana and Ayumi, both Deaf, meet at a sign language circle. Attracted to the same sex for the first time, Hana decides to begin a relationship with Ayumi, who is still unsure. However, when Hana tells her parents about the relationship, she is rejected by her mother. Despite Hana's shock over her mother's attitude, Ayumi is persistent and invites her to a gathering of Deaf LGBTQ. The people she meets, though grappling with troubles of their own, are forward-looking and positive about the future. Depicted by a Deaf director, in full sign language, this is a heart-warming tale of Deaf and LGBTQ intersectionality.

Online : worldwide

1st screening: 12/4 (Saturday) 10:30 JST (available for 72 h)
2nd screening: 12/7 (Tuesday) 21:00 JST (available for 72 h)
3rd screening: 12/9 (Thursday) 20:00 JST (available for 72 h)

※ Advance tickets ¥1000, Same-day tickets ¥1200

Ayako Imamura (Director) - Online talk - Online streaming ※The streaming URL will be announced on the festival site.

Audism Unveiled

Director: Ben Bahan, H-Dirksen Bauman, Facundo Montenegro
 2008/USA/American Sign Language, English/
 Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/57 mins/
 Online streaming limited to Japan



Audism, combining the words *auditory* and *racism*, refers to the concept that being able to hear or doing things by hearing and speaking is superior, and doing otherwise is inferior. In 1988, Deaf students attending Gallaudet University stage a protest, "Deaf President Now," demanding the election of a Deaf university president, and in so doing, increasing public awareness of Audism for the first time. In this film, they recount their experiences of oppression and discrimination that they have faced, bringing to light the topic of Audism.

Online : limited to Japan

1st screening: 12/4 (Saturday) 10:30 JST (available for 72 h)
 2nd screening: 12/7 (Tuesday) 21:00 JST (available for 72 h)
 3rd screening: 12/9 (Thursday) 20:00 JST(available for 72 h)

※ Advance tickets ¥1000, Same-day tickets ¥1200

Ben Bahan, H-Dirksen Bauman, (Directors) - Online talk - Online streaming ※The streaming URL will be announced on the festival site.

We were there...we are here

Production: Boğaziçi University - The SIGN-HUB team
 2020/Europe/Various sign languages/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/42 mins/Online streaming worldwide



The SIGN-HUB project researches the history and sign languages of the Deaf community in Europe, and this film showcases interviews with several elderly Deaf people. A variety of sign languages are represented, including Catalan, French, German, Israeli, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, and Turkish sign languages. From each sign language community, the interviewer asks about their personal stories, work, education, and major events that they have experienced.

Online : worldwide

1st screening: 12/4 (Saturday) 10:30 JST (available for 72 h)
 2nd screening: 12/7 (Tuesday) 21:00 JST (available for 72 h)
 3rd screening: 12/9 (Thursday) 20:00 JST (available for 72 h)

※ Free of charge

【Special Screening Event】

In order to promote the domestic film industry, we have selected a film that we would like you to watch with Japanese subtitles. The film industry this year has been abuzz with accolades for this acclaimed, charming feature film about the brilliance of youth.

Sasaki in My Mind

Director: Takuya Uchiyama
 2020/Japan/Japanese/Japanese subtitles/119 mins/Online streaming limited to Japan



27 year old Yuji moves to Tokyo to pursue his dream of becoming an actor, however he is not successful. One day, he reunites with his high school classmate, Tada, and through exchanging conversations, he recalls both the happy and bittersweet memories of his high school days, as well as the charismatic Sasaki and his friends. This poignant youth drama evokes the sense of being a hero that is in everyone's hearts when they are in their 20's. Acclaimed at the 33rd Tokyo International Film Festival, and other domestic and overseas festivals, won the 20th Kaneto Shindo Awards Silver prize, and other awards.

Online : limited to Japan

1st screening: 12/4 (Saturday) 10:30 JST (available for 72 h)
 2nd screening: 12/7 (Tuesday) 21:00 JST (available for 72 h)
 3rd screening: 12/9 (Thursday) 20:00 JST(available for 72 h)

※ Advance tickets ¥1000, Same-day tickets ¥1200

【Encore Screening】

Past works screened at the Tokyo International Deaf Film Festival will be streamed online during the festival period.

Sound and Fury

Director: Josh Aronson
 1999/USA/American Sign Language, English/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/79 mins/Online streaming limited to Japan

Cochlear implants are increasing the potential for people to recover from hearing loss. Should we use cochlear implants on a young child with a hearing loss? Or should we accept them for who they are? This documentary follows two couples who are forced to make this difficult choice. Through the lead up to the decision, it reflects the inherent conflict of opinions and the feelings of the heart.

Sound and Fury: 6 Years Later

Director: Josh Aronson
 2006/USA/American Sign Language, English/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/29 mins/Online streaming limited to Japan

Set six years after "Sound and Fury," this documentary is produced with support of Cochlear Implant Children's Association. The daughter, now nine years old and wearing a cochlear implant, is smooth and adept at navigating the world of the hearing, growing through lip reading and conversation. She will have two worlds - her parent's world of the Deaf, and the world of the hearing. What is the potential of cochlear implants after all? This work presents the realities of the Deaf world.

Sign Language Time

Co-directors: Su Qing, Mina
 2010/China/Chinese Sign Language, Chinese/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles, Simplified Chinese subtitles/87 mins/Online streaming limited to Japan

Following "White Tower", screened at the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival, this documentary film focuses on the perspective of Fang Fang, a Deaf dancer, who has studied dancing since she was very young. It then follows the daily lives of some of the 20 million Deaf across different generations who live in many different cities in across China. Through their vivid and lively sign language, this movie portrays the social and cultural background of the Deaf such as employment, education, crime, and marriage. China comes to life from the perspective of both directors; Su Qing, who has Deaf siblings, and Mina, who focuses on photographing the lives of the Deaf.

Reverse Polarity

Director: Jules Dameron
 2018/USA/American Sign Language, English/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles/43 mins/Online streaming limited to Japan

Breaking up with his boyfriend, Chase is seeking a new romance when he meets mysterious matchmaker, Eight, who promises him the connection of a soulmate. Eight finds the perfect match, but it is completely unexpected for Chase. The surprising twist is a must see! This LGBT romantic comedy, aimed at Deaf adults, is a compilation of six episodes originally broadcast on DPAN TV, that distributes videos for the Deaf. Rated R-18 *Not available to those under the age of 18.

Signing in Languages

Co-directors: Su Qing, Mina
 2010/China/Chinese Sign Language, Chinese/Japanese subtitles, English subtitles, Simplified Chinese subtitles/87 mins/Online streaming limited to Japan

Sign languages are diverse, and each has its own grammar and syntax, as well as richness and complexity. In this documentary, the director challenges the uncharted territory of sign language. Studying some three generations of both Deaf and hearing, researchers at the University of Haifa's Sign Language Research Lab talk about the sign language that has evolved in Israel over the last century. The director in this film continues to discuss humanity's mother tongue, translations, and intergenerational transmissions, and invites the audience to broaden our recognition of human languages.

I'll Walk Towards You with the Eyes of a Deaf

Director: Laetitia Carton
 2015/France/French, French Sign Language/Japanese subtitles/105 mins/Online streaming limited to Japan

Director Laetitia Carton's friend Vincent, who is deaf, dies suddenly. In her grief, she points the camera and spotlights the world of the Deaf and sign language in France. Though society continues to suppress them, their frustrations, and both familial love and conflict, as well as the realities of Deaf education are highlighted. This documentary, 10 years in the making, evokes feelings of the heart in the Deaf. Exhibited at the Montreal World Film Festival, and other film festivals.

Online : limited to Japan

1st screening: 12/4 JST(Saturday) 10:30 (available for 72 h) 2nd screening: 12/7 (Tuesday) 21:00 JST (available for 72 h) 3rd screening: 12/9 (Thursday) 20:00 JST (available for 72 h)
 ※ Advance tickets ¥800, Same-day tickets ¥1000