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Take Your Kids to the Children's Film Festival Seattle 2020

Timely topics and good stories in bite-sized packages for kids

BY GEMMA ALEXANDER (/AUTHOR/GEMMA-ALEXANDER)

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PHOTO: Still from short film "The Girl at the End of the Garden" (Bonnie Dempsey, Ireland, 2019), included the CFFS' shorts program called Lift-Off, recommended for ages 9 and older.

For 15 years, the [Children's Film Festival Seattle](#)

[\(https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/\)](https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/) has brightened late winter with some of the best children's cinema from all over the world. The festival has grown to become the largest of its kind on the West coast, with 175 films from 47 countries; 96 of the films are animated. While the primary target audience is children ages 3-14, good stories appeal to all ages.

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And as we say every year, it's so worth seeing one of the festival's shorts programs or feature films. They'll completely blow up your kids' idea of what movies are – and not just what kind of stories movies tell, but how they're told and who tells them.

This year's festival runs Feb. 27–March 8, 2020, with most events taking place at [Northwest Film Forum \(https://nwfilmforum.org/\)](https://nwfilmforum.org/) on Capitol Hill. The [closing day event \(https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/cffs-2020-special-events/\)](https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/cffs-2020-special-events/) on Sunday, March 8, takes place at the [Rainier Arts Center \(https://www.rainierartscenter.org/\)](https://www.rainierartscenter.org/).

Tapas of shorts

This year the festival is taking a sort of tapas approach. There are 23 themed shorts programs – the festival's largest selection to date – so that families can zero in on the film experience that best suits them. Usually running about one hour long with between five and a dozen short films, everyone is sure to find something to their taste among these bite-sized treats.



Still from short film "Like Playing" (Berenice Adrianzen Zegarra, Peru, 2018, in Spanish with English subtitles) included the CFFS' shorts program called Wild and Free, recommended for ages 8 and older.

Consistent with the festival's goal of encouraging children to see themselves as courageous change agents, this year's line-up features programs with age-appropriate presentations of timely themes like climate change, migration and gender identity.

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There are also two special showcases of youth-made films: [Nascent Creations](https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/2020/nascent-creations-short-film-program/) (<https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/2020/nascent-creations-short-film-program/>) (recommended for ages 11 and older) is an international collection of shorts selected by a local youth jury, with several of the filmmakers in attendance. The other special showcase, called [The 90-Second Newbery Film Festival](https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/2020/90-second-newbery-2020/) (<https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/2020/90-second-newbery-2020/>) (recommended for ages 7 and older), features the winning films from a contest to

create under-two-minute films telling the entire stories of Newbery award-winning books. The featured books will be for sale at a lobby pop-up shop hosted by Secret Garden Books.

Also of note is the annual [Indigenous Showcase](https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/2020/indigenous-showcase-short-film-program-cffs/) (<https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/2020/indigenous-showcase-short-film-program-cffs/>), featuring shorts by indigenous film makers of all ages. Inuit films are well represented this year, and there are two Lummi entries as well. The Lummi Nation is in northwest Washington.



Still from short film "Konigiri-Kun Butterfly" (Mari Miyazawa, Japan, 2019, nonverbal) included in CFFS' shorts program called Sun Circle: Films from Japan, recommended for all ages.

Families can [browse online](https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/cffs-2020-short-film-programs/) (<https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/cffs-2020-short-film-programs/>) to find these and other programs sorted by age (with gentler stories and subtitle-free visual storytelling for the youngest audiences) or language (there are programs for speakers and learners of French, Japanese, Spanish and German). Besides age recommendations and language information, online program descriptions include content advisories, previews and run-times to make planning very easy.

Feature films

Some of this year's [seven feature films](https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/cffs-2020-feature-films/)

(<https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/cffs-2020-feature-films/>) tie in with the topical themes of the festival. For example, the documentary "[Microplastic Madness](https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/2020/microplastic-madness-environmental-feature-film/) (<https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/2020/microplastic-madness-environmental-feature-film/>)" (recommended for ages 8 and older) follows a group of Brooklyn fifth graders as they learn about microplastics and take action to reduce plastic use in their own school.

In "[Zara and the Magical Football Boots](https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/2020/zara-magical-football-boots-feature-film-cffs/)

(<https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/2020/zara-magical-football-boots-feature-film-cffs/>)" (recommended for ages 8 and older), a story about a little girl who lives in a refugee center, the roles of secondary characters are all performed by real-life asylum seekers. Despite the serious backdrop, "Zara" is a lighthearted movie. Like the other stories of childhood independence and family relationships that round out the feature film offerings, it combines serious issues and childish fun through a kids-eye view.

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Still from short film "Miles Away" (Barbara Brunner, Switzerland, 2018, nonverbal) included in CFFS' shorts program called Kaleidoscope, recommended for ages 2 and older.

Hands-on cinema

An interactive lobby play-scape will be open throughout the festival, providing an opportunity for kids to get their wiggles out before the movies.

For kids with a more focused interest, check out the festival's [workshops](https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/cffs-2020-workshops/) (<https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/cffs-2020-workshops/>). An all-ages "direct animation" workshop will teach kids how to animate directly onto film without cameras or computers. At a second workshop, tweens (ages 10-14) can learn the tricks to making a great skateboarding film. The instructors will provide the skating, but kids are encouraged to bring their own recording device – cell phones are fine. There will also be a free full-day workshop for Muslim high school students that will present them with technical skills while helping them frame their own personal narrative.

Special events

The festival kicks off with "[The Cat's Meow](https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/2020/opening-night-cats-meow-short-film-program/)

(<https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/2020/opening-night-cats-meow-short-film-program/>)" (recommended for ages 6 and older), a collection of cat-

focused shorts from eight countries. (If you go, consider sticking around after the show for an unrelated but equally exciting dance premiere by local choreographer Amanda Morgan (<https://nwfilmforum.org/events/seattle-project-presents-new-premiere-amanda-morgan/>).)

[Special Q&A appearances \(https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/cffs-2020-special-events/\)](https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/cffs-2020-special-events/) by film directors are sprinkled throughout the festival's screenings, which wrap up on March 8 with a full day of events at the Rainier Arts Center. The day will start with a pancake breakfast and include a free screening of films made during the festival workshops, a surprise line-up of international shorts and an announcement of the Children's Jury prizes. The closing night's feature film, "[Moving Stories \(https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/2020/closing-night-moving-stories-film-screening-dance-experience/\)](https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/2020/closing-night-moving-stories-film-screening-dance-experience/)," (recommended for ages 9 and older) is a documentary about the power of dance to help children overcome trauma.

If you go...

Where: The 15th annual [Children's Film Festival Seattle](#)

(<https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/>) takes place mostly at [Northwest Film Forum](#) (<https://nwfilmforum.org/>), 1515 12th Ave., Seattle (<https://www.google.com/maps/@47.6144227,-122.3193686,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x54906acdc98c3b3f:0xab8d3db5e175193b!8m2!3d47.6144227,-122.3171799>). The closing day event on Sunday, March 8, including pancake breakfast screenings, takes place at the [Rainier Arts Center](#) (<https://www.rainierartscenter.org/>), 3515 Alaska Street, Seattle (<https://www.google.com/maps/place/3515+S+Alaska+St,+Seattle,+WA+98118/@47.5603908,-122.2901709,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x54906a0ce4252843:0x571762c0327c2d86!8m2!3d47.5603908,-122.2879822>).

When: Thursday, Feb. 27–Sunday, March 8, 2020. Schedule [online](#)

(<https://www.childrensfilmfestivalseattle.org/about/2020-festival-calendar/>).

Tickets: \$13 for adult tickets; \$10 for children ages 11 and under. [Festival passes](#) (<https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/4457458>) are also available.

Parking: Parking in the Capitol Hill neighborhood is notoriously difficult and expensive. Consider public transportation. If you must drive, the lot at the Greek Orthodox Church and Howell and Seattle Central College's Harvard Garage usually have available spaces.

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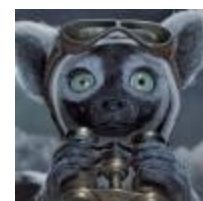
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