



Artis—Naples Naples International Film Festival

Home of The Baker Museum & Naples Philharmonic

For Immediate Release

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THE 2025 NAPLES INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FILMMAKER AWARD WINNERS

**Isabel Hagen's *On a String* takes both the Jury Award for
Best Narrative Feature and NIFF's Focus on the Arts Award**

**Additional Jury Awards go to
Cindy Meehl's *Jimmy & The Demons* (Best Documentary Feature)
and Lee Knight's *A Friend of Dorothy* (Best Short Film)**

**Audience Awards presented to
Ricardo de Montreuil's *Mistura* (Best Narrative Feature),
Jenna Naranjo Winters' *Dream Touch Believe* (Best Documentary Feature)
and Guto Barra and Peter DiMario's *Parker & Sammy* (Best Short Film)**

Naples, FL (October 28, 2025) — The 2025 Naples International Film Festival (NIFF) announced the filmmaker award winners during a spirited Closing Night Awards Ceremony on Sunday, October 26, rounding off a weekend of screenings and celebrations.

Isabel Hagen's drama ***On a String***, about a gifted violist's struggle to find her place as a professional musician, was a two-time winner, taking both the Jury Award for Best Narrative Feature (and a cash prize of \$2,500) and NIFF's Focus on the Arts Award (and \$1,500). The Jury Award for Best Documentary Feature (and \$2,500) went to Cindy Meehl's ***Jimmy & The Demons***, which follows 79-year-old sculptor and artist Jimmy Grashow over four years as he devotes himself to a towering magnum opus. For the first time, NIFF also presented a Jury Award for Best Short Film (and \$1,500), which was awarded to Lee Knight's ***A Friend of Dorothy***.

NIFF's trio of jurors for the 2025 edition of the juried competition included actor and filmmaker Judge Reinhold (*Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, *Beverly Hills Cop*), filmmaker and Golden Globe-nominated actress Cynthia Gibb (*Salvador*, *Fame*), and Jim Brunzell III, director of festivals at Dark Star Pictures and director of the Twin Cities-based Sound Unseen Festival.

The Audience Award for Best Narrative Feature (and \$1,250) went to Ricardo de Montreuil's ***Mistura***, while the Audience Award for Best Documentary Feature (and \$1,250) was presented to Jenna Naranjo Winters' ***Dream Touch Believe***. The Audience Award for Best Short Film (and \$1,000) went to Guto Barra and Peter DiMario's ***Parker & Sammy***.

Additional filmmaker awards selected by the festival programmers included Wendy Lobel's **Anxiety Club** receiving the Impact Award, Alexis Lloyd's **Group – The Schopenhauer Project** earning the Programmers' Choice Award and Reed Arnold's **Do Us Part** taking Best First Feature honors. Kathy Meng received the Rising Star Award for her directorial work on **Willow and Wu**, Stevo Chang and Rachel Mathieu's **Timeless** won NIFF's Indie Spirit Award and KT Bryden's **The Little Brown Bird** received the Florida Film Award. Each of these filmmakers also received a \$750 cash prize.

The awards ceremony was an entertaining and emotional evening, from Reed Arnold's self-deprecating humor as he accepted Best First Feature to Sammy Callari and Parker Seward's joyful celebration following the announcement of their film's win. It concluded with Cindy Meehl and Guzzy Grashow's heartfelt remarks reflecting on the recent passing of artist and film subject Jimmy Grashow. Filmmakers expressed deep gratitude for the warmth of Naples audiences and the care shown by the NIFF team throughout the festival. The evening's presentations rounded off a week that once again demonstrated why NIFF is frequently recognized by *MovieMaker* Magazine among its top film festivals.

NIFF began with its signature Opening Night Film and Party red carpet celebration, which featured a full audience enjoying the festival's gala program of short films in Hayes Hall on the Artis—Naples Kimberly K. Querrey and Louis A. Simpson Cultural Campus. Audiences continued to turn out in record numbers at Naples' Alamo Drafthouse Cinema and during NIFF's popular Screenings Under the Stars in Norris Garden on the Artis—Naples cultural campus. The festival concluded with a special presentation of **The Princess Bride in Concert** in Hayes Hall, with the Naples Philharmonic performing Mark Knopfler's iconic score live under the baton of Principal Pops Conductor Jack Everly—a fitting finale to NIFF's multidisciplinary celebration of film and the arts.

The 2025 Naples International Film Festival Award Winners:

NIFF JURY AWARDS

Best Narrative Feature – \$2,500

On a String

Director: Isabel Hagen

Best Documentary Feature – \$2,500

Jimmy & The Demons

Director: Cindy Meehl

Best Short Film – \$1,500

A Friend of Dorothy

Director: Lee Knight

NIFF PROGRAMMERS' AWARDS

Focus on the Arts Award – \$1,500

On a String

Director: Isabel Hagen

Impact Award – \$750

Anxiety Club

Director: Wendy Lobel

Indie Spirit Award – \$750

Timeless

Directors: Stevo Chang, Rachel Mathieu

Programmers' Choice Award – \$750

Group – The Schopenhauer Project

Director: Alexis Lloyd

Best First Feature – \$750

Do Us Part

Director: Reed Arnold

Rising Star Award – \$750

Kathy Meng, director

Willow and Wu

Best Florida Film Award – \$750

The Little Brown Bird

Director: KT Bryden

NIFF AUDIENCE AWARDS

Audience Award Winner, Narrative Feature – \$1,250

Mistura

Director: Ricardo de Montreuil

Audience Award Winner, Documentary Feature – \$1,250

Dream Touch Believe

Director: Jenna Naranjo Winters

Audience Award Winner, Best Short Film – \$1,000

Sammy & Parker

Directors: Guto Barra, Peter DiMario

NIFF extends deep appreciation to Festival Presenting Sponsors Richard and Christine Lublin. Generous support is also provided by the Collier County Tourist Development Council and Media Sponsor Gulfshore Life.

Sincere thanks to Opening Night Film and Party Sponsor The Woodruff Institute; Friday and Saturday Night Norris Garden Screening Sponsors Vincent and Debra Maffeo; Closing Night Awards Ceremony, Film and Wrap Party Sponsor Scott Meloun; and Theater Sponsors Entech, Bobbi and David Drobis, FisherBroyles, and Tes and Brian Manley.

ARTIS—NAPLES

Artis—Naples, home of The Baker Museum and Naples Philharmonic, creates and presents world-class visual and performing arts. Through our multidisciplinary offerings, we inspire, educate and entertain to engage and enrich the growing and diversifying community.

KIMBERLY K. QUERREY and LOUIS A. SIMPSON CULTURAL CAMPUS

Led by CEO and President Kathleen van Bergen and Artistic and Music Director Alexander Shelley, Artis—Naples offers more than 800 performing and visual arts experiences annually across its 8.5-acre Kimberly K. Querrey and Louis A. Simpson Cultural Campus and throughout the community.

Artis—Naples welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors each year for a broad array of artistic and educational opportunities perfect for audiences of all backgrounds and interests. The cultural campus is home to five buildings, including two performance halls (Frances Pew Hayes Hall and Myra J. Daniels Pavilion), The Baker Museum, the Toni Stabile Education Building and the Kohan Administration Building.

NAPLES PHILHARMONIC

The Naples Philharmonic has long been recognized as one of the cornerstones of Southwest Florida's arts community. As part of Artis—Naples, the Naples Philharmonic performs more than 140 orchestral and chamber music concerts, as well as opera and ballet, education, community and special event concerts annually between September and June in the 1,477-seat Hayes Hall, the 283-seat Daniels Pavilion and

around Southwest Florida. The Naples Philharmonic has enjoyed a history of working with world-class music directors. Following a successful inaugural season in 2024-25, Alexander Shelley commences his second season as artistic and music director in 2025-26. Renowned violinist James Ehnes continues as artistic partner through the 2025-26 season, working with Naples Philharmonic musicians in a variety of settings with a focus on inspiring and embodying a high level of artistry. Podium leadership also includes Principal Pops Conductor Jack Everly, celebrating 16 years in this role in the 2025-26 season and bringing pops performances that celebrate music across genres.

THE BAKER MUSEUM

The Baker Museum is the foremost fine art museum in Southwest Florida, presenting an ambitious slate of exhibitions annually to complement installations of works from its permanent collection. Comprising more than 3,000 objects, the museum's broad holdings of 20th- and 21st-century art reflect particular strengths in modern art of the United States and Mexico. The Baker Museum's collection demonstrates the generosity and commitment of area collectors, including significant gifts from the collection of the late Olga Hirshhorn.

In 2025, The Baker Museum was accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the highest national recognition for museums in the United States, affirming the museum's commitment to excellence, accountability and public service.

With more than two decades of collecting and exhibiting, the museum is committed to the stewardship and scholarship of its collections and to fostering inspiring and transformative experiences with the visual arts. At the same time, The Baker Museum partners with the world's leading arts institutions to make extraordinary exhibitions accessible to the Southwest Florida community—including recently the National Portrait Gallery, London and the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation. In 2020, Artis—Naples celebrated the renovation and expansion of The Baker Museum and adjoining Norris Garden, designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architecture/Landscape/Urbanism, which created new spaces for multidisciplinary exploration and social interaction.

EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY

In addition to creating and presenting visual and performing arts, Artis—Naples provides robust education and community activities for students of all ages in Collier and Lee counties. Each season, thousands of Collier County Public School students interact with Artis—Naples education programming, both on our cultural campus and in their classrooms. Beyond our commitment to youth education, the Lifelong Learning program provides informative lectures and study opportunities for adults seeking to engage more deeply with the arts.

The Friends of Artis—Naples, comprised of more than 3,500 donor households, offers activities, travel experiences and events designed to foster a deeper relationship between patrons and the arts.

In 2017, Artis—Naples acquired the Naples International Film Festival (NIFF), expanding its film offerings and providing a platform for the festival's continued excellence and growth. In 2023, the festival's 15th anniversary year, NIFF was named one of *MovieMaker* Magazine's "20 Great Film Festivals in Vacation Destinations."