

DDF26 Film Lineup:

NOTE: Many of the screenings will be immediately followed by talkbacks, Q&As, and/or panel discussions. We've indicated a number of these expected post-screening discussions below, but they are subject to change. Keep an eye on the online film descriptions for the most up-to-date information.

Agatha's Almanac Amalie Atkins | 2025 | Canada 9/25/2026 | 01:00 PM | Oriental Theatre (Abele Cinema) Fiercely independent 90-year-old Agatha Bock lives alone on her ancestral farm. Despite health challenges, she defiantly tends to her land, cultivating heirloom seeds passed down through generations. Agatha's meditative processes and daily rituals form a vivid counterpoint to the rapid pace of contemporary life. Shot by an all-female crew over six years on 16mm film, the project captures the handmade materiality inherent in both the medium of film and Agatha's tactile world. This program will be followed by a talkback.

Alicia Keys: Girl From Hell's Kitchen One9 | 2026 | United States 9/24/2026 | 07:00 PM | Downer Theatre (North Cinema) In her own words, Grammy-winner Alicia Keys shares stories from her childhood while tracing her journey from the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood of New York City to the Broadway stage. More than the story behind a Tony-winning musical, this intimate documentary reveals a young woman navigating life as the daughter of a single mother, surrounded by artists and dreamers, overcoming challenges, finding her voice, and forging a powerful path toward artistic freedom, growth, and acceptance.

All The Walls Came Down Ondi Timoner | 2025 | United States 9/25/2026 | 06:00 PM | Oriental Theatre (Herzfeld Cinema) When the L.A. fires of January 2025 destroy the home of multi-MFF alum filmmaker Ondi Timoner (*Dig*, *We Live in Public*, *Last Flight Home*), she does what filmmakers do best—picks up a camera—finding her town of Altadena in ruins and neighbors facing displacement. Led by activist Heavenly Hughes, the community rallies in solidarity amid climate catastrophe in this taut depiction of the transcendent power of place and community resilience in the face of grief and loss. This program will be followed by a virtual filmmaker Q&A.

Amazing Live Sea Monkeys Mark Becker, Aaron Schock | 2026 | United States 9/27/2026 | 07:00 PM | Downer Theatre (North Cinema) From her crumbling estate on the Potomac, Yolanda Signorelli von Braunhut wages a David-and-Goliath battle to reclaim her late husband's iconic toy, *Amazing Live Sea Monkeys!*, from the corporate forces who stole the rights from her. Whether you raised Sea Monkeys, begged your parents to order them from a magazine, or love stories about mad genius entrepreneurs, this film will hook you with the toy's surprising origins, enduring legacy, and the mysterious story behind its invention. This program will be followed by a filmmaker Q&A.

Ask E. Jean Ivy Meeropol | 2025 | United States 9/26/2026 | 02:00 PM | Downer Theatre (North Cinema) Over five decades, journalist E. Jean Carroll built a career urging women to speak up and stand their ground. In 2019, galvanized by the #MeToo movement, she did just that—publicly accusing a certain real estate mogul and U.S. president of sexual assault. As that figure continues to contest her account, *Ask E.* Jean expertly explores the high personal cost of refusing to stay silent and the power of truth to combat gaslighting.

Ceremony Banchi Hanuse | 2026 | Canada 9/25/2026 | 07:15 PM | Oriental Theatre (Abele Cinema) When the ooligan fish vanishes from Bella Coola, British Columbia, its absence lingers like a scar on the Nuxalk people.

From a ramshackled radio station, Indigenous voices rise through crackling airwaves to trace the forces no one was meant to uncover. What begins as a local broadcast becomes an awakening as testimony, watercolour animation and rare archival weave a story of survival, return and the quiet revolution of a Nation that refuses to disappear.

Cheyenne Taimi Arvidson | 2026 | United States 9/26/2026 | 02:30 PM | Oriental Theatre (Abele Cinema)
Cheyenne follows four fearless cowgirls competing in bronc riding on the rodeo circuit. After nearly a century of male-exclusivity, the women's circuit is back to prove their perseverance, talent, and grit. In a sport that teaches you how to take a hard fall and get back up again, each of these women enters the arena for different reasons, pushing their physical and mental limits to win a coveted spot at the showdown known as the Daddy of 'em All: Cheyenne Frontier Days.

Daughters of the Forest: Mycelium Chronicles Otilia Portillo Padua | 2026 | Mexico 9/26/2026 | 08:00 PM | Downer Theatre (North Cinema) This sci-fi documentary invites us to reconsider the experiences of both human and non-human inhabitants of our world. We follow Lis and Juli, two young scientists from indigenous communities in Mexico that have long lived in symbiosis with the many mushrooms in their regions. Their pursuits are threatened by deforestation, lack of opportunity, and loss. Still, they share how mushrooms show us different possibilities of coexistence, helping them overcome obstacles to reshape their lives and futures.

Earth to Michael Nico Lopez-Alegria, Zach Zuckerman | 2025 | United States 9/25/2026 | 02:00 PM | Downer Theatre (North Cinema) Co-director Nico López-Alegría turns the camera on his dad, Michael, a NASA astronaut who became legendary for his lengthy missions to outer space. During his time in orbit, the family broke apart. Although Michael returned to Earth, he never came home. Equal parts interstellar and intimate, this coming-of-age story confronts two men of different generations and sexualities, asking us what sacrifices we'll make for our loved ones to achieve their dreams.

Exodus Nimco Sheikhaden | 2025 | United States, Panama 9/25/2026 | 12:30 PM | Oriental Theatre (Herzfeld Cinema) What does life after life in prison look like? What is the deeper toll of separation and how can families heal after? EXODUS serves as a humanizing portrait of two women, Trinity Copeland and Assia Serrano, as they struggle to make sense of their lives post-release, exploring these overarching questions through a lyrical and poignant lens, and examining how one rebuilds a family fractured by profound loss. This program will be followed by a talkback.

First They Came for My College Patrick Xavier Bresnan | 2026 | United States 9/25/2026 | 04:00 PM | Oriental Theatre (Abele Cinema) When their elite public honors college is transformed by a political coup, a group of students and faculty resist and risk everything to save the college they love.

Flood Katy Scoggin | 2025 | United States 9/26/2026 | 05:00 PM | Downer Theatre (North Cinema) Director Katy Scoggin is starting a project about evolution and geologic time, but disagreements with her father—a young-earth creationist who rejects the theory of evolution—keep getting in the way. When she films him in the classroom, where he is a loved and respected science teacher, she begins to see him more fully. With clarity and wry humor, Flood captures the complexity of a family that is both tightly knit and deeply divided. This program will be followed by a filmmaker Q&A.

Ghost in the Machine Valerie Veatch | 2025 | United Kingdom 9/26/2026 | 05:15 PM | Oriental Theatre (Herzfeld Cinema) Ghost in the Machine approaches ubiquitous questions like “What is AI?”, “Who is building it?”, and

“What will humans become?” by exploring how emerging technologies have historically reshaped identity, culture, and global power. Director Valerie Veatch interviews a wide variety of historians, philosophers, sociologists, journalists, and thinkers from around the world to lend fresh perspectives on what AI is, how it works, and how people can maintain a sense of agency in a threatening and overbearing tech-driven world. This program will be followed by a filmmaker Q&A.

Girl Climber Jon Glassberg | 2025 | United States 9/25/2026 | 05:15 PM | Downer Theatre (North Cinema) Join Emily Harrington as she prepares for her next epic climb: ascending El Capitan in 24 hours. Featuring breathtaking cinematography and appearances from Alex Honnold (Free Solo), Girl Climber flips the script on the traditional climbing documentary—an emotional, edge-of-your-seat journey that’s as moving as it is heart-stopping. Against the majestic backdrop of Yosemite, Emily’s story becomes a portrait of courage, resilience, and what it truly takes to break barriers.

Heavy is the Crown - WORLD PREMIERE! Sean Kafer | 2026 | United States 9/27/2026 | 04:30 PM | Oriental Theatre (Abele Cinema) Heavy Is the Crown follows charismatic Milwaukee community activist Vaun Mayes as he works alongside those most affected by cycles of violence, systemic neglect, and polarizing policing. Mayes reveals the resilience and care that sustain a community from within, empowering everyday community members to build programs and practices that nurture positivity in our city. The feature will be preceded by Dear Milwaukee, a short film made by youth at Arts@Large exploring similar themes and ideas. This program will be followed by a filmmaker Q&A and talkback.

Human Shield Erin Persley | 2026 | United States 9/27/2026 | 12:30 PM | Downer Theatre (North Cinema) Facing a growing far-right extremist movement, Human Shield is an intimate portrait of abortion clinic escorts protecting vulnerable patients as they endure one of the most hostile 30-second walks of their lives. Told through the perspective of three clinic escort leaders from diverse backgrounds and experiences, this film investigates the struggle to maintain safety and balance mental exhaustion on the front lines of America’s longest culture war. This program will be followed by a filmmaker Q&A and talkback.

Jane Elliott Against the World Judd Ehrlich | 2026 | United States 9/26/2026 | 05:45 PM | Oriental Theatre (Abele Cinema) A rural Iowa schoolteacher became a national voice against racism after leading a controversial 1968 lesson in discrimination with her all-white third-grade class. Now nearly 90, Jane Elliott refuses to hold back amid today’s fights about race, history, and power after a lifetime of speaking out. A journey through Elliott’s remarkable life, this film also addresses the impact of one’s activism and determination to speak truth to large-scale powers on their family and home.

Kids Like Me Cynthia Lowen, Jon Cohrs | 2026 | United States 9/26/2026 | 11:00 AM | Downer Theatre (North Cinema) Meet Oliver, a 12-year-old murder-mystery enthusiast with a vivid imagination and a rare genetic condition. Inspired by his love of the genre, he sets out to bring his own mystery to the screen—with a little help from his friends. Offering an intimate window into growing up with disability and the power of community, Kids Like Me celebrates the pursuit of creative dreams and what becomes possible through collective care. This program will be followed by a talkback.

Landscapes of Memory Leah Galant | 2026 | United States, Germany 9/27/2026 | 06:30 PM | Oriental Theatre (Herzfeld Cinema) As a Jewish American filmmaker studies her past in Berlin, she grapples with the reality of her trauma being weaponized to inflict violence on Palestinians. This program will be followed by a filmmaker Q&A.

Love Apptually Shalini Kantayya | 2025 | Australia, United States 9/27/2026 | 03:00 PM | Oriental Theatre (Herzfeld Cinema) Following a French journalist's journey from fascination to disillusionment, Love Apptually uncovers how dating platforms—used by hundreds of millions worldwide—are designed for user optimization rather than authentic human connection. What begins as a personal curiosity about Tinder evolves into a global investigation into the technological systems shaping modern love. Through deeply personal stories and investigative reporting, this film, from the director of Coded Bias, explores how a multibillion-dollar tech industry is quietly reshaping desire. This program will be followed by a virtual filmmaker Q&A.

Mexicanamerican Eddie Sanchéz | 2026 | United States 9/24/2026 | 06:30 PM | Oriental Theatre (Herzfeld Cinema) Expertly merging old VHS home movies with new family interviews, filmmaker Eddie Sánchez traces his parents' journey from Mexico to the United States in this poignant and affecting documentary debut. While Sánchez explores a deeply personal history, this film resonates beyond families with similar stories and considers the power of reclaimed, remixed, and reinterpreted familial archives. The feature will be preceded by the local short film ■■■■ (Little Madeline McGuire) directed by Madeline James McGuire. This program will be followed by a filmmaker Q&A.

Odyssey Avi Belkin | 2026 | United States 9/27/2026 | 01:45 PM | Oriental Theatre (Abele Cinema) This remarkable archival documentary captures America's greatest adventures in space: from the rise of NASA to the gripping rescue mission of Apollo 13, told entirely through over 2,500 hours of rare material including much never before available to the public. Audiences are brought to the center of the mission by focusing on astronaut and pilot Jim Lovell, using his personal experience with space flight as a framework to understand the effort and sacrifice required for the Apollo missions.

Once Upon a Time In Harlem David Greaves, William Greaves | 2026 | United States 9/25/2026 | 08:15 PM | Oriental Theatre (Herzfeld Cinema) A decade after his death, genre-defying filmmaker William Greaves delivers a final surprise with Once Upon a Time In Harlem. Drawn from a 1972 gathering, the film unites surviving luminaries of the Harlem Renaissance (Arna Bontemps, Noble Sissle, James Van Der Zee—to name a few) in electric conversations about art and legacy. Hailed as a "triumph" by The Hollywood Reporter and poised for awards season, this treasure offers a vivid, firsthand encounter with a movement that reshaped American history.

Out of Reach: The Struggle for the American Dream - WORLD PREMIERE! Adam Sheiner Najberg, John W Miller, Faith Kohler | 2025 | United States 9/26/2026 | 11:00 AM | Oriental Theatre (Abele Cinema) Do you think life is overall better or worse for workers than it was 40 years ago? Out of Reach seeks to answer this question by following five years in the lives of four generations of Milwaukee workers, documenting the ongoing slide that has made the middle class disappear at an alarming clip. Our history is a cautionary tale for America about the consequences of trickle-down economics and a nihilistic culture war. This program will be followed by a Q&A and talkback.

Sara Bareilles: Good Grief Josh Alexander | 2026 | United States 9/27/2026 | 08:00 PM | Oriental Theatre (Abele Cinema) For the first time in seven years, Grammy-winning singer-songwriter Sara Bareilles returns to the studio with close friends to begin recording her most intimate album yet, born of profound personal loss and grief. This cinematic portrait observes the most private corners of Sara's creative process, as well as her personal life. What unfolds in front of the camera is the incredibly raw experience of mining one's own pain to create art—and the hope that carries an artist forward. This program will be followed by a filmmaker Q&A.

Shorts: Drawing Lines The Life of the Party | Meg Griffiths, Scott Faris Women Laughing | Kathleen Hughes, Liza Donnelly 9/24/2026 | 07:00 PM | Oriental Theatre (Abele Cinema) Uniting two midlength documentaries about women challenging boundaries, Drawing Lines explores reinvention, and what happens when women draw lines of their own. From three Texan leaders navigating political divisions to the history of The New Yorker's cartoonists, these films consider who gets to shape the conversation. This program will be followed by a filmmaker Q&A.

Sincerely, Ric Jesse Carfield | 2025 | United States 9/26/2026 | 11:30 AM | Oriental Theatre (Herzfeld Cinema) In the 1970s and 1980s, Ric Routledge transformed the dog-show world, then walked away without explanation. After his death in 2017, a family friend discovered a storage unit filled with videotapes, cassette interviews, photographs, postcards, and an unpublished autobiographical novel. That friend's son, director Jesse Carfield, re-assembled this treasure trove into Sincerely, Ric, using Ric's ephemera to form the shape of a life lived between public ambition and private disappearance, asking what remains when someone documents everything except the ending. This program will be followed by a filmmaker Q&A.

Soul Patrol J.M. Harper | 2026 | United States 9/26/2026 | 02:00 PM | Oriental Theatre (Herzfeld Cinema) Can reckoning with the past bring peace to those who lived it? The Vietnam War's first Black special operations team reunites to tell their story. Using a combination of reenactments, vintage photography, and personal reflections, J.M. Harper's Soul Patrol provides a rich perspective on both the Vietnam War and its collision with racial injustice, uncovering a hidden chapter of American military history in this winner of the US Documentary Competition Directing Award at Sundance 2026.

The Endless Frontier Marilyn Ness | 2026 | United States 9/27/2026 | 11:00 AM | Oriental Theatre (Abele Cinema) The Endless Frontier follows three laboratories from neurorobotics in Utah to immunology in New Jersey to ocean science in the South Pacific. These scientists' research underpins the medicines, technologies, and environmental knowledge that shape everyday life. This film is an intimate, urgent portrait of scientists working to solve some of the most pressing challenges of our time, while revealing the growing threat to the American research engine and what is at stake for us all if it falters.

The Hockey Player Jacqueline Doorey | 2026 | United States 9/27/2026 | 04:00 PM | Downer Theatre (North Cinema) Attention Heated Rivalry devotees! Shot over half a decade, The Hockey Player follows Canadian-born defenseman (and former Milwaukee Admiral) Luke Prokop as he makes history as the first professional athlete under NHL contract to come out as gay. Raised in an often homophobic culture, Luke navigates the pressures of professional sports, the absence of LGBTQ+ role models on the ice, and the changing landscape of a sport enjoying a newfound cultural moment.

The Lorraine Sam Pollard | 2026 | United States 9/25/2026 | 03:00 PM | Oriental Theatre (Herzfeld Cinema) Renowned documentarian Sam Pollard tells the astonishing history of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, TN—best known as the site of the assassination of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Stories about the legacy of Black travel and lodging patterns soon give way to the compelling and complex question of whether locations with deep racial trauma should remain, be replaced, or be used to further an understanding of history.

Time Warp Allison Berg | 2026 | United States 9/26/2026 | 09:15 PM | Oriental Theatre (Abele Cinema) Fifty years after The Rocky Horror Picture Show became a queer rite of passage, the film's message of "don't dream it, be it" feels more potent than ever. In conservative Rock Springs, WY, 25-year-old Kenny Starling launches

the town's first drag and queer theater company, staging their own shadowcast of the cult classic. Time Warp follows Kenny and the determined troupe as they give themselves over to the absolute pleasure of chosen family and radical self-expression. This program will be followed by a talkback.

Welcome Space Brothers Jodi Wille | 2023 | United States 9/25/2026 | 08:00 PM | Downer Theatre (North Cinema) Welcome Space Brothers tells the astonishing true story of the Unarius Academy of Science, an extraterrestrial-channeling spiritual school and self-healing community. Guided by the dazzlingly outlandish Ruth E. Norman ("Archangel Uriel"), Unarius evolved from a fringe metaphysical movement into a wildly inventive public-access television phenomenon, complete with cosmic pageantry, interplanetary wisdom, and DIY sci-fi visions. With the same curiosity that made The Source Family so captivating, director Jodi Wille brings this singularly American saga of belief, performance, and transcendence to life.

When a Witness Recants Dawn Porter | 2026 | United States 9/26/2026 | 08:45 PM | Oriental Theatre (Herzfeld Cinema) In 1983, author Ta-Nehisi Coates learned that a 14-year-old boy was murdered in his Baltimore middle school. Upon revisiting the case, he uncovers the truth: Three innocent teenagers were wrongfully convicted and spent 36 years in prison—creating a lasting impact on the accused, the witnesses, and their community. From MFF alum Dawn Porter, this illuminating documentary features masterfully interwoven deposition videos, TV news reports, and powerful black and white illustrations by comic book artist Dawud Anyabwile.

Who Moves America Yael Bridge | 2026 | United States 9/27/2026 | 12:00 PM | Oriental Theatre (Herzfeld Cinema) The world's largest package delivery company, UPS, moves millions of packages daily. In 2023, with the current contract set to expire, the Teamsters mounted increasing pressure on UPS to improve working conditions or face the might of 340,000 workers walking off the job. Through intimate portraits and on-the-ground reporting, this documentary showcases the power of collective action, capturing organizing efforts led by union leaders as they negotiate for members of North America's largest labor organization.

The full lineup of films is available online now at www.mkefilm.org/ddf.