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**NEWS RELEASE**

## **FESTIVAL'S *IN CONVERSATION WITH...* PROGRAMME BRINGS INSIGHT INTO THE STORIES BEHIND TOP INTERNATIONAL TALENT**

**Featuring onstage discussions with Isabelle Huppert, Mark Wahlberg, Zhang Ziyi, Karan Johar, and more**

**TORONTO** — The Toronto International Film Festival® unveiled its exciting *In Conversation With...* lineup, featuring eight internationally celebrated special guests **Hiam Abbass, Kunle Afolayan and Genevieve Nnaji, Sônia Braga, Isabelle Huppert, Karan Johar, Mark Wahlberg, and Zhang Ziyi.** *In Conversation With...* offers intimate, in-depth, personal and compelling discussions from cinema's preeminent talent.

"Our *In Conversation With...* events provide Festival goers the rare opportunity to engage with cinematic luminaries from around the world. This year's diverse and global slate of high-profile guests include art-house legends, Hollywood stars and industry heavyweights, who are sure to resonate with and captivate all film lovers," said Theresa Scandiffio, Director, Adult Learning, and programmer of the *In Conversation With...* series at TIFF. "These intimate conversations bring together prestigious actors and filmmakers to share inspiring stories and candid anecdotes that reveal unexpected moments throughout their illustrious careers."

The 41st Toronto International Film Festival runs from September 8 to 18, 2016.

### **The *In Conversation With...* programme includes:**

#### **In Conversation With... Hiam Abbass**

Palestinian actor and filmmaker Hiam Abbass is a commanding figure in art-house cinema. With films like *Satin rouge*, *The Syrian Bride*, and *Paradise Now*, Abbass built a reputation for embracing complex roles often set amongst conflict in the Middle East. Her breakthrough performance in Steven Spielberg's *Munich* brought Abbass to international acclaim, and while the increased profile brought exposure, she was outspoken in her refusal to portray characters that perpetuate stereotypes of Arab women and Middle Eastern culture. Her critically lauded performances in both *The Visitor* (written and directed by Thomas McCarthy) and *Lemon Tree* (her second feature for director Eran Riklis) showcase her ability to imbue characters with steely strength. Each role reveals brave acts through small gestures, exhibiting a well-honed craft that generates a strong bond between actor and audience. Abbass has extended her artistic practice behind the camera to direct shorts and features, including her acclaimed 2012 feature debut, *Inheritance*. Abbass will discuss her expertise as an established storyteller who not only promotes cross-cultural understanding, but also inspires exceptional cinema.

#### **In Conversation With... Kunle Afolayan and Genevieve Nnaji**

Luminaries in Nigeria's film scene, Kunle Afolayan and Genevieve Nnaji have attained dazzling success on their own terms. Celebrated as the leading lady of Nollywood and the face of African cinema, Nnaji has been showered with awards for her work in films such as *Ijé: The Journey*, *Road to Yesterday*, and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. A hugely successful producer and media entrepreneur, Nnaji strives to generate positive images of Africa and is a major voice in the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. Following in the footsteps of his father, beloved actor, producer, and director Ade Love, Afolayan garnered accolades with his directorial debut, *The Figurine*, and continues to innovate as a filmmaker and industry heavyweight. Hailed as "Scorsese in Lagos" by *The New York Times*, Afolayan has elevated the standards of Nigerian cinema over the past decade with elaborate release strategies — including the

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premiere of *The CEO* on a Lagos-Paris Air France flight — to establish himself as a key driving force behind the new Nollywood. Afolayan and Nnaji will illuminate the complex dynamics behind the rise of Nollywood.

### **In Conversation With... Sônia Braga**

Brazilian-born actress Sônia Braga possesses a singular grace and intelligence that transcend culture and language. Perhaps best known for her bravura tripartite performance opposite Raul Julia and William Hurt in the late Héctor Babenco's *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, Braga commands the screen, at once dangerously captivating and deeply mysterious. Yet her latest role possesses a very different sort of power; it's a thoughtful character study not commonly found in onscreen roles for women. Kleber Mendonça Filho's *Aquarius*, screening at the Festival, stars Braga as Clara: earthy, articulate, and a formidable opponent for the film's arrogant, ruthless antagonists. Braga's career is varied and illustrious, encompassing beloved television shows like *Sex and the City* and *Alias*, as well as films by such legendary directors as Nicolas Roeg, John Frankenheimer, and Robert Redford. Braga will take to the stage for an in-depth onstage conversation about her inimitable body of work.

### **In Conversation With... Isabelle Huppert**

Isabelle Huppert dominates the screen like no one else. Her staggering oeuvre — which spans over four decades and features more than 100 roles — situates the French actor as one of the most prolific and fiercely committed artists in cinematic history. She has delivered indelible performances for master filmmakers Jean-Luc Godard (*Every Man For Himself*), Claire Denis (*White Material*), Michael Haneke (*The Piano Teacher*), Catherine Breillat (*Abuse of Weakness*), David O. Russell (*I Heart Huckabees*), and Claude Chabrol (*La Cérémonie*, for which she won the coveted César Award). Her emotive and cerebral work has elevated Huppert to the ranks of screen legends Bette Davis and Setsuko Hara. This year at the Festival she appears in three films, bringing introspection and subtlety to Mia Hansen-Løve's *Things to Come* and Bavo Defurne's *Souvenir*; and she will galvanize audiences in Paul Verhoeven's *Elle*, a wilfully daring and controversial work that owes its every frame's intelligence and energy to Huppert. She will take the stage to discuss her most iconic roles and their place in cinematic history.

### **In Conversation With... Karan Johar**

Director, producer, screenwriter, actor, costume designer, television icon: Karan Johar is a Bollywood Renaissance man. From his blockbuster 1998 directorial debut, *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, to his ongoing successes as the helmsman behind the Bollywood distribution dynasty Dharma Productions, to his highly addictive celebrity talk show *Koffee with Karan*, Johar has established himself as an industry titan. Son of famed producer Yash Johar, Karan was raised in an environment bursting with professional insight into the film business. Mentored in both the artistic and commercial sides of India's dynamic entertainment industry, Johar hit the ground running — and never stopped. His directorial credits rapidly accumulated and became box-office hits: *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham...*, *My Name is Khan*, *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna*, which played the Festival, *Student of the Year*, *Bombay Talkies*... the list goes on. Johar will discuss his story thus far, exploring the artistic influences that define his style and paying tribute to the mentors who helped him forge his thrilling career.

### **In Conversation With... Mark Wahlberg**

Acclaimed actor, award-winning producer, and enterprising businessman — if Mark Wahlberg didn't exist, Hollywood would have to invent him. His early acting work rapidly revealed his sophistication and magnetism, and by age 30 Wahlberg had already appeared in some of the finest American films of the last quarter century, such as David O. Russell's *Three Kings* and Paul Thomas Anderson's *Boogie Nights*. Subsequent roles have included an Oscar-nominated performance in Martin Scorsese's *The Departed* and his unforgettable work in Russell's *The Fighter*. This one-time dark horse is now an influential producer for both film (*Lone Survivor*) and television (*Entourage*, *Boardwalk Empire*). A powerhouse in action, drama, and comedy, Wahlberg is perhaps most convincing in the role of the working-class hero — as evidenced in *Deepwater Horizon*, which premieres at this year's Festival. Wahlberg will take the stage for what will undoubtedly be an engaging conversation about his fascinating career.

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### In Conversation With... Zhang Ziyi

Graceful and formidable, glamorous and badass, international superstar Zhang Ziyi has time and again brought strong, multi-dimensional female characters to the screen. One of the Four Dan Actresses (most bankable stars) of China, Zhang first came to prominence in Ang Lee's Academy-Award winning *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, garnering international award nominations and global stardom. Aided by her classical dance training at Beijing's prestigious Central Academy of Drama, Zhang mesmerized audiences with dizzying choreographed moves in the martial arts films *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers*, directed by her longtime collaborator Zhang Yimou. She successfully crossed over into the North American film industry, most notably starring in the American adaptation of *Memoirs of a Geisha*, for which she received Golden Globe, BAFTA, and Screen Actors Guild Award nominations. Zhang has demonstrated an extensive range, working alongside the visionary Wong Kar-Wai in the masterful *2046* and in the director's latest contribution to world cinema, *The Grandmaster*. Zhang Ziyi will take to the stage to discuss her journey from fearless dancer-actor to paragon of female empowerment.

The 2016 Toronto International Film Festival Official Film Schedule was released today and is available at TIFF Bell Lightbox or by visiting [tiff.net/schedule](http://tiff.net/schedule).

Purchase Festival ticket packages until August 24 while quantities last. Individual tickets are on sale from Sunday, September 4 to Sunday, September 18. Purchase packages and tickets online at [tiff.net/festival](http://tiff.net/festival), by phone at 416.599.TIFF or [1.888.599.8433](tel:18885998433). Festival Box Office, located at 225 King Street West, opens on August 23.

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### About TIFF

TIFF is a charitable cultural organization whose mission is to transform the way people see the world, through film. An international leader in film culture, TIFF projects include the annual Toronto International Film Festival in September; TIFF Bell Lightbox, which features five cinemas, major exhibitions, and learning and entertainment facilities; and innovative national distribution program Film Circuit. The organization generates an annual economic impact of \$189 million CAD. TIFF Bell Lightbox is generously supported by contributors including Founding Sponsor Bell, the Province of Ontario, the Government of Canada, the City of Toronto, the Reitman family (Ivan Reitman, Agi Mandel and Susan Michaels), The Daniels Corporation and RBC. For more information, visit [tiff.net](http://tiff.net).

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