



ART LIBRARIES SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

**Art Libraries Society of North America, 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference  
Fairmont Banff Springs, Banff, Alberta, Canada, May 5-9, 2006**

**NFB Film Night**, Conference Centre Theatre,  
**Saturday, May 6, 2006. 9:00-11:30pm**

Sponsor: National Film Board of Canada

Organizers: Jane Devine Mejia, Jill Patrick, and James Rout

Volunteers: Leslie Abrams, Ida Z. DaRoza, C. Yuki Dixon, Greta Earnest, and Cheryl Siegel.

Opening remarks (Jane Devine Mejia)

Fellow movie-lovers, welcome to this evening of films sponsored by the National Film Board of Canada.

Chers cinephiles, bienvenue a cette soiree de cinema commanditee par l'Office national du film du Canada.

Before introducing tonight's programme, there are a few brief announcements.

There are four films in the first part of programme, then a 10-minute intermission. After the intermission, we'll be drawing four prizes generously donated by the NFB [animation DVD, t-shirt, two bags]. You must be in the theatre with your raffle ticket in hand to claim your prize, so be sure to return promptly after the intermission. Our ushers will ring a bell when it's time to return to your seats.

We would like to thank our volunteer projectionist Greta Earnest, and volunteer ushers Leslie Abrams, Ida DaRoza, Yuki Dixon and Cheryl Siegel for helping to make the evening run smoothly.

We would also like to thank the Fairmount Banff Springs Hotel for providing the projector and theatre equipment free of charge.

And now on to the programme:

Film critic Leonard Maltin has said: "Every time I see the symbol of the National Film Board of Canada at the start of a film, I pay attention—because I know I've got something to look forward to."

I would like to give you a brief history of the National Film Board of Canada, because it is unique in the world of filmmaking. The NFB began at the outset of World War II as a propaganda agency funded by the federal government to support the war effort. Documentary pioneer John Grierson came over from Scotland to head the new film unit. Before long, the Board was producing newsreels that kept Canadians informed of the war's progress and boosted morale on the home front. Series like "Canada

"Carries On" and "The World in Action" brought dramatic wartime events into theatres across the country.

John Grierson recognized the importance of skilled animators in producing titles and graphics for the newsreels and hired a fellow Scot, Norman McLaren, to establish the NFB's animation unit. Today Norman McLaren is recognized internationally as one of the great geniuses of animation. His work at the NFB for over forty years has influenced animators from Eastern Europe to Japan, not only for its technical innovation and artistic originality, but also for the deep emotions and empathy for the human condition that it demonstrates. McLaren recruited and encouraged other gifted artists at the NFB, among them Ryan Larkin, about whom you will hear more later this evening.

When the war ended, the NFB continued making documentaries and animated films about all aspects of Canadian life: "films in the national interest" as they were called. These movies were shown by traveling projectionists in community halls, factories, schools and church basements across the country as part of an effort to inform and entertain Canadians in this pre-television era. Although the federal government funded the NFB as a cultural agency, the Board enjoyed an arms-length relationship with Ottawa and its artists could express themselves largely without government interference.

In the 1960s and 70s, NFB filmmakers explored such themes as social justice, the changing family, the plight of Aboriginal Canadians, the environment and the status of women. As French-speaking Quebec asserted its cultural and political identity, the NFB divided its production activities into separate French and English units, each with animation and documentary studios. Outstanding Quebec directors Claude Jutra and Denys Arcand were part of this new wave of French-speaking filmmakers. A women's filmmaking unit "Studio D" presented the feminist perspective on social issues such as women in the workplace and abortion. A network of NFB film libraries across the country made films available to schools and community groups, while Canada's embassies presented NFB films around the world. In the 1970s, the Film Board pioneered 3-D IMAX technology and was among the first to make IMAX documentaries.

In the twenty-first century, the NFB continues to evolve and reinvent itself as motion picture technology and distribution media change. Today NFB films are seen on television, sold on DVD, loaned through agreements with public libraries and featured at film festivals around the world. One of the major collections of NFB animation is at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Although there are now Canadian film schools and private production companies that partially fulfill a role once performed by the NFB, the Film Board still offers young filmmakers the opportunity to experiment, to tackle unconventional themes and to contribute to defining Canada's cinematic identity.

Jill Patrick and I chose the films you will see tonight with several criteria in mind. Instead of making a "greatest hits" selection of NFB titles, with two exceptions, we chose films made in the past ten years. Several are Oscar winners or nominees; others have received awards at Cannes and international film festivals. Several of the filmmakers are from Western Canada. All of the films demonstrate the creative approach that characterizes the NFB in their themes, artistic technique and visual quality.

The two short documentaries depict two sides of the Canadian coin: the life and work of colonial artist Frances Hopkins and contemporary First Nations artist Laurence Paul Yuxweluptun's response to colonization. For those of you unfamiliar with our history, the Indian Act, which features in Paul's performance piece "An Indian shoots the Indian Act", is the 1868 legislation that defined the Indian reservation system and deprived Aboriginal Canadians of their civil and language rights.

Ryan Larkin's lyrical student film "Syrinx" opens our programme and Stephen Arthur's tribute to Vancouver painter Jack Shadbolt closes this first part of our evening.

And now, please sit back and enjoy the programme. Bon Cinema!

Intro to Part Two (Jill Patrick)

When Pablo Picasso saw Norman McLaren's 1946 short "Hen Hop", he exclaimed: "At last, something new in the art of drawing!" This year the National Film Board celebrates 65 years of animated filmmaking. The five films in Part Two of our programme demonstrate the virtuosity and creativity of the NFB artists who have followed in McLaren's footsteps. You will find details on each film in your programme, but let us mention a few points:

The Oscar-winning "Ryan" explores the troubled life of Ryan Larkin, whose film "Syrinx" started our evening.

"When the Day Breaks" is the work of Calgary-based artists Wendy Tilby and Amanda Forbis. Wendy trained at the Emily Carr College of Art and Design in Vancouver and has won many international animation awards for this and her two earlier films "Tables of Content" and "Strings".

Finally, the NFB cult classic "The Big Snit" ends the programme. This film is the only one you will see tonight that uses conventional cel animation. It is typical of the quirky Winnipeg style made famous by Richard Condie and Cordell Barker and is one of the NFB's all-time most popular films.

Animators are alchemists who create a world out of simple materials like paper, paint and pencils, tempering them in the fire of imagination. We invite you to enjoy the magical universe of these five artists.