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expect the unusual

By Mal Vincent
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NORFOLK

For those who want to savor unusual movies they won't find in the malls, this weekend starts an adventure.

The 17th annual Virginia Festival of Jewish Film opens Saturday for a run of 10 feature films at Tidewater Community College's Roper Performing Arts Center. Expect the unusual.

The performing arts center, at 340 Granby St. in Norfolk, was once the home of Loew's Theater, the largest movie theater in Virginia. For this festival, it returns to its origins as a movie house.

The festival will showcase films from around the world — four from Israel, two from France, two from the United States and one each from Australia and Germany. Teviya Abrahams, the film festival coordinator for the sponsoring Simon Family Jewish Community Center in Virginia Beach, said the event is being done in partnership with Tidewater Community College and is sponsored by Old Point National Bank.

Here is the schedule:

"A MATTER OF SIZE" (pictured) From Israel, in Hebrew with English subtitles, this raucous comedy follows a man who is banned from the weight-loss club in the city of Ramia because he keeps gaining instead of losing. He winds up as a sumo wrestler. A dessert party follows the film (\$25 for this event, \$10 for all other screenings). 8 p.m. Saturday.

"THE WEDDING SONG" Young romance is thwarted by Nazi occupiers in 1942. (English subtitles) 2 p.m. Sunday.

"AJAMI" Gang warfare in an impoverished Arab, Christian and Muslim neighborhood in Israel. The Israeli entry as best foreign language film in the upcoming Academy Awards competition. (English subtitles) 7 p.m. Sunday.

"ZRUBAVEL" Ethiopian immigrants face challenges in their new Israeli homeland. (English subtitles) 7 p.m. Monday.

"YOO HOO, MRS. GOLDBERG" The festival sponsors a return screening of the documentary on the life of Gertrude Berg, who became famous as television's first situation-comedy star in "The Goldbergs." (Norfolk's Naro Expanded Cinema screened this in October.) 7 p.m. Tuesday

"MARY AND MAX" Philip Seymour Hoffman (Oscar winner for "Capote") and Toni Colette star as the voices of two lonely people who communicate between New York City and Australia in this animated feature. 7 p.m. Wednesday

"GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT" Virginian-Pilot movie critic Mal Vincent hosts a screening of this Academy Award-winning film, which features four Oscar-nominated performances from Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire, Celeste Holm and Anne Revere. Holm won the Oscar for best supporting actress, while Elia Kazan won for directing this groundbreaking, controversial 1947 film about a reporter who pretends to be Jewish to cover a story about anti-Semitism. 7 p.m. Jan. 28

"THE LITTLE TRAITOR" Alfred Molina stars as a British sergeant who befriends a 12-year-old Israeli boy during the British occupation of Palestine just before the declaration of Israeli independence in 1948. (English subtitles) 7 p.m. Jan. 30.

"TWO LADIES" Two feisty older women, both born in Algeria, discover they have a lot in common. One is Jewish, the other Muslim. (English subtitles) 2 p.m. Jan. 31.

"EYES WIDE OPEN" An attraction between two young men leads to religious turmoil. The award-winning film concerns Aaron, a butcher, who hires Ezri, a refugee from Yeshiva, to work in his shop. (English subtitles) 7 p.m. Jan. 31

Tickets for all films are \$10 for adults, \$6 for students and seniors, and free for TCC students and faculty. Opening night tickets, including the dessert party, are \$25. Festival passes, covering all events, are \$125 for two, and \$100 for two senior passes. A single adult pass is \$65; \$55 for a single senior pass. Order at (757) 321-2338 or www.jewishva.org.