

HOT DOCS 2025 PERSISTER PROGRAM SHARES STORIES OF WOMEN SPEAKING UP AND BEING HEARD

Toronto, March 25, 2025 – Hot Docs is pleased to announce seven feature documentaries screening as part of the popular **Persister** program during the 2025 Festival. The films included in this program shine a light on the voices of strong, inspirational women who are speaking up and being heard. The 2025 Hot Docs Festival will take place April 24 to May 4 in Toronto.

The Persister program will feature the world premieres of **MAMA**, in which the filmmaker moves beyond the repair of her broken body into to a deeper, more vulnerable soul healing, following a breast cancer diagnosis; and **Widow Champion**, in which a widow rises to help other widows reclaim their rightful property, in rural Kenya where women lose their homes after a husband's death.

The program will feature the international premiere of **Mama Goals**, in which Charlotta abandons a secure full-time healthcare job to pursue her dream of becoming a comedian.

North American premieres include **9-Month Contract**, in which a Georgian woman becomes a repeat surrogate in the country's under-regulated system in order to secure a safe future for her teenage daughter; **The Last Ambassador**, about Afghanistan's only female ambassador who fearlessly defies the Taliban's gender discrimination by enabling the secret education of girls; and **My Missing Aunt**, in which a South Korean filmmaker uncovers the erased existence of her aunt who died by suicide before graduating college.

Persister will also see the Canadian premiere of **I Died**, in which three women with a shared past in the Zapatista Army of National Liberation now fight to overcome broken dreams, gender violence and grief.

Screening times and descriptions for films in the Persister program appear below. In many cases, filmmakers will be in attendance for post-screening discussions. For more information on the program please visit www.hotdocs.ca/whats-on.

9-MONTH CONTRACT

D: Ketevan Vashagashvili | P: Anna Khazaradze, Nino Chichua, Sylvia Nagel, Martichka Bozhilova | Georgia, Bulgaria, Germany | 2025 | 80 min | North American Premiere

In this tender yet harrowing tale of mother-daughter love, a Georgian woman will do anything to secure a safe future for her teenage daughter, including being a repeat surrogate in the country's under-regulated system until the physical toll nearly destroys her.

Monday, April 28, 8:45 PM - TLB3

Thursday, May 1, 11:15 AM - TLB2

I DIED

D: Ana Ts'uyeb | P: Ana Ts'uyeb, Benjamin Fash | Mexico | 2024 | 74 min | Canadian Premiere

Three women in Chiapas, Mexico, who've a shared past in the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, now fight to overcome broken dreams, gender violence and grief to build a better life for their children and themselves within their patriarchal Tsotsil community through achieving autonomy and the right to own land.

Thursday, May 1, 1:45 PM - TLB4

Saturday, May 3, 5:45 PM - TLB3

THE LAST AMBASSADOR

D: Natalie Halla | P: Peter Drössler, Arash T. Riahi, Sabine Gruber, Natalie Halla | Austria | 2025 | 80 min | North American Premiere

From her now unofficial office in Vienna, Manizha Bakhtari remains Afghanistan's only female ambassador. As she fearlessly defies the Taliban's gender discrimination by enabling the secret education of girls, she becomes one of the most important voices for women in her country.

Friday, April 25, 8:00 PM - TLB3

Sunday, April 27, 11:30 AM - TLB2

MAMA

D: Ana Cristina Benítez | P: Bernarda Cornejo Pinto, Ana Cristina Benítez | Ecuador | 2025 | 95 min | World Premiere

After a breast cancer diagnosis, the director dives into a healing journey with delicate sensitivity. Moving beyond the repair of her broken body, she progresses to a deeper, more vulnerable soul healing as she grapples with memories, family dynamics and love.

Sunday, April 27, 4:30 PM - TLB4

Tuesday, April 29, 11:45 AM - TLB4

MAMA GOALS

D: Ellen Fiske | P: Ina Holmqvist | Sweden | 2025 | 70 min | International Premiere

Charming and fearless, Charlotta abandons a secure full-time healthcare job to pursue her dream of becoming a comedian, jeopardizing her relationship with her family. Can she reconcile her responsibilities as a wife and mother with her drive for comedic success?

Wednesday, April 30, 7:30 PM - TLB2

Friday, May 2, 2:00 PM - TLB2

MY MISSING AUNT

D: Juyeon Yang | P: Duhyun Ko, Sarah Kang | South Korea | 2024 | 78 min | North American Premiere

A South Korean filmmaker uncovers the erased existence of her aunt who died by suicide before graduating college. As she confronts family secrets and dating violence, she exposes generations of patriarchal damage inflicted on women expected to live as "good daughters."

Saturday, April 26, 11:45 AM - TLB3
Wednesday, April 30, 10:30 AM - TLB2

WIDOW CHAMPION

D: Zippy Kimundu | P: Heather Courtney, Zippy Kimundu | Kenya | 2025 | 95 min | World Premiere
In rural Kenya where women lose their homes after their husband's death, a widow rises as a fierce advocate to help other widows reclaim their rightful property and provide a home for their children.

Saturday, April 26, 2:30 PM - TLB2
Monday, April 28, 5:15 PM - TLB4

###

Hot Docs (www.hotdocs.ca), North America's leading documentary festival, conference and market, is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing and celebrating the art of documentary and to creating production opportunities for documentary filmmakers. Hot Docs will present its 32nd annual edition from April 24 to May 4, 2025, in cinemas across Toronto. Hot Docs will also mount a dynamic series of knowledge sessions, networking opportunities and market programs for documentary practitioners and industry delegates, including the renowned Hot Docs Deal Maker and Works-in-Progress screenings. Year-round, Hot Docs supports the Canadian and international industry with professional development programs and a multi-million-dollar film fund portfolio. Additionally, it fosters education through documentaries with its popular free program Docs For Schools. Hot Docs owns and programs the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, a century-old landmark located in Toronto's Annex neighbourhood and the world's first and largest documentary cinema.

Starting Tuesday, March 25, Festival ticket package holders, including Doc Soup subscribers, can redeem their ticket packages, and Hot Docs Members can purchase single tickets. Starting Tuesday, April 1, single tickets will be available to the public. Tickets and ticket packages can be purchased and/or redeemed [online](http://www.hotdocs.ca) at www.hotdocs.ca or in person at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema Box Office, located at 506 Bloor Street West (hours vary daily in accordance with cinema screenings). Single tickets are \$20 to regular Festival screenings and \$23 to Special Presentations screenings (\$18-\$20 members). Special events vary in price. A Festival 12-Pack is \$209 and a Festival 20-Pack is \$299. Hot Docs offers free tickets for all screenings before 4:00 p.m. to seniors and students with valid photo I.D., available online the day of the screening, subject to availability.

Hot Docs is proud to include Rogers as its Founding Partner; Netflix as its Presenting Partner; and Telefilm Canada, the Government of Ontario, and the Canada Media Fund as its Major Supporters. Full list of sponsors and partners: <https://hotdocs.ca/about/partners>

FILM STILLS AVAILABLE

Media Download Site: <https://downloads.hotdocs.ca/downloads>

Hot Docs is a charitable, not-for-profit organization committed to advancing the art of documentary and supporting opportunities for independent filmmakers.

Password: media2025

Media Contact:

Bill Alexander

Media Relations Manager, Hot Docs

balexander@hotdocs.ca