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**THE POWER AND BEAUTY OF AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE POETRY EXPLORED IN
DEAF JAM, PREMIERING ON *INDEPENDENT LENS*
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2011 AT 10 PM**

Performance Art Meets Poetry Through Language in Motion

(San Francisco, CA) — Filmmaker Judy Lieff explores the beauty and power of American Sign Language (ASL) poetry in *Deaf Jam*, the story of deaf teen Aneta Brodski's bold journey into the spoken word slam scene. Longing to explore and fully participate in the hearing world, Aneta dives into ASL poetry, a vibrant three-dimensional art form where body movements convey meaning. ASL poetry liberates a deaf poet from the confines of spoken language. There is no paper or text. Rhymes are measured in hand shapes and meter in movements. Images cut and dissolve as its verses transcend all spoken word. *Deaf Jam* premieres on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens* on Thursday, November 3, 2011 at 10 PM (check local listings).

Introduced to ASL Poetry at the Lexington School for the Deaf, Aneta, an Israeli immigrant high school student living in New York, welcomes the chance to perform with "spoken word" poets. Passionate, fearless, and expressive, Aneta works hard at her craft and eventually meets Tahani Salah, a hearing Palestinian slam poet. The two young women embark on a collaboration, creating a *pas de deux* performance that transcends politics.

Utilizing high-energy music, animated graphic text, and other innovative techniques, *Deaf Jam* illuminates ASL poetry's extraordinary potency and power. Taking us inside a fascinating and vibrant world where self-expression and cultural identity are fiercely pursued, *Deaf Jam* may change the way we think about the non-hearing world forever.

To learn more about the film, visit the *Deaf Jam* interactive companion website (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/deaf-jam/>), which features detailed information on the film, including an interview with the filmmaker and links and resources pertaining to the film's subject matter. The site also features a Talkback section where viewers can share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.



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About the Filmmakers

Judy Lieff (Producer/Director) is a dancer, filmmaker, and teacher. She earned her M.F.A. at the California Institute of the Arts. Lieff has produced, directed, and edited many award-winning short dance films. She is a six-time grant recipient for dance/media projects and has years of experience in both film production and post-production. She began her relationship with the deaf community through the making of an experimental cine-poem, "Duties of My Heart." The film became a catalyst for four consecutive grants to teach video production workshops she designed for deaf teens. Lieff is also the recipient of a National Dance/Media fellowship from the Pew Charitable Trusts and two New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) independent film grants.

Steve Zeitlin (Co-Producer) served as co-producer of *From Mambo to Hip Hop*, a documentary about the South Bronx funded by ITVS and broadcast on public television across the U.S. as part of Latino Public Broadcasting's *Voces* series. He received his Ph.D. in folklore from the University of Pennsylvania, and is the director and co-founder of City Lore, an organization dedicated to the preservation of New York City's — and America's — living cultural heritage.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history. Presented by the Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at www.pbs.org/independentlens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS; it is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

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