



**The Adventures
of Saul Bellow**

A film by Asaf Galay

Producers

Asaf Galay, Naama Pyrtiz

Editor

Tal Rabiner

Director Of Photography

Avner Shahaf

Original Music

Frank Ilfman

Executive Producers

Aviva Kempner

Anthony McCarten

Kathryn Dietz



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES



The project was produced in collaboration with: **The Film & Media Collaborative**
Gesher Multicultural Film Fund | AVI CHAI | Maimonides Fund



MAIMONIDES FUND

Link: <https://vimeo.com/383226289>

Password: Bellow2021

One-liner:

The first ever documentary on the Nobel Laureate Saul Bellow.

Short synopsis:

The film traces Bellow's rise to eminence and examines his many identities: reluctant public intellectual, 'serial husband', father, Chicagoan, Jew and American. Interviews with the novelist's family and friends will shed new light on Bellow's personality and the way he turned life into art.

Synopsis:

The winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, three National Book Awards and the Pulitzer Prize, Saul Bellow transformed modern literature. He illuminated twentieth century American life through philosophical depth and a wild sense of humor. Some of the greatest American writers alive today credit him as their main inspiration. Far from an easy hero, Bellow also offended the social sensibilities of many readers, wreaked havoc in personal relationships and left a trail of unanswered questions in his wake. The Adventures of Saul Bellow is the first-ever documentary about him.

Director's note:

I was born in Chicago in 1978. Like Saul Bellow, I too can say, "I am an American, Chicago born." For me, as for Bellow, that claim would be both the truth and a lie. My family came from Israel to the United States only for a short period of time, while my father completed a PhD at the University of Chicago. Growing up in Israel and moving back to the U.S. in my late thirties, I have always felt both fascinated and alienated by American culture—a contradiction that Bellow vividly explores in his work.

I realized I had to make a film about Bellow while working on my last project, The Muses of Isaac Bashevis Singer. That film told the story of how Singer used English language translation to transform his Yiddish writing into an American voice. As Singer's first translator, Bellow was the bridge between the world of Jewish particularity and American, Anglophone universalism. I began to look for the ingredients in Bellow's work that allowed him to become the missing link between these two worlds.

My affinity for the writer has deepened and developed over the years, stretching beyond questions of Jewish and American identity. I have come to admire the author's bold insistence on humanism, how he cleaves to unfashionable notions like 'culture' and 'personality.' At the same time, I am troubled by Bellow's racist and sexist imagery. I believe that these qualities make his work difficult to teach and study today. In my film, I am determined to let both of these sides of the author come to life. I seek a cinematic language that can bring out all the layers of his work for a new generation—the humorous, the spiritual, the profound, the American, the Jewish, the lowbrow, the highbrow, the just and the unjust.

Director Asaf Galay

Documentary Filmmaker – Director / Screenwriter

TBD *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story* Funded by NEH
2021 *The Adventures of Saul Bellow* – PBS/American Masters
Funded by NEH, Winner of Ken Burns/Library of Congress Prize
2018 *Army of Lovers in the Holy Land* – Winner of Haifa International Film Festival
2017 *Hasidstock* – 6 episode documentary series about Jewish pop starts in the Ultra-Orthodox community
2015 *The Hebrew Superhero* – The history of comics in Israel
2014 *The Muses of Bashevis Singer* -- The Story of the Yiddish writer and his female translators
2012 *Its Okay to be Sentimental* – A journey with the grandson of poet Nathan Alterman
2010 *Fashion Rules* - 6 episode documentary series on the history of fashion in Israel
2009 *Tel Aviv - Yaffo* - 3 episodes series on the history of Tel Aviv-Yaffo
2004 *The Jewish State – The Story of Israeli Humor* – 11 episode documentary series

Museum Curator

Beit Hatfutsot – the Museum of the Jewish People

-curator of exhibits on Jewish Humor, David Seymour, Jewish Fashion Designers, Amy Winehouse, Bob Dylan.