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For Immediate Release

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Lewis Center for the Arts and Princeton Garden Theatre present

Spike Lee's *Passing Strange: The Movie* starring Stew on Wednesday, September 20

Cinema Today: Film Blackness Series Screening to be followed by Q&A with Stew, the star of the film



Photo caption: Mark “Stew” Stewart, the star and co-writer of the hit Broadway version of *Passing Strange*, will discuss his work with Spike Lee following the screening.

Photo credit: Photo courtesy of Stew

Who: Screening of Spike Lee's film *Passing Strange: The Movie* followed by Q&A with Stew, the star and co-writer of the film and the award-winning Broadway rock musical of the same title

What: Presented as part of Cinema Today: Film Blackness, a series organized by Visiting Associate Professor Michael Gillespie, by the Visual Arts Program of the Lewis Center for the Arts and Princeton Garden Theatre

When: Wednesday, September 20, at 7:30 p.m.

Where: Princeton Garden Theatre, 160 Nassau Street

(Princeton, N.J.) On Wednesday, September 20, the Visual Arts Program of the Lewis Center for the Arts at Princeton University and Princeton Garden Theatre will present a screening of Spike Lee's *Passing Strange: The Movie*, a film version of the award-winning rock musical, at the Garden Theatre. Starting at 7:30 p.m., the film will be followed with a Q&A with Stew, the star and co-writer of the hit Broadway show.

Passing Strange follows a young African American musician known as “the Youth” who is thrust into the world of rock’n’roll on a journey to self-discovery. Written by Stew and his creative partner Heidi Rodewald, *Passing Strange* won the 2008 Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical as well as the best musical awards from the Drama Desk Awards, the New York Drama Critics Circle, and two Obie Awards.

“Stew's musical memoir, a hit on Broadway, has been faithfully recorded by Spike Lee, and somehow also enriched by the presence of the camera,” said a *New York Times* review of the film.

Passing Strange is being presented as part of the series Cinema Today: Film Blackness, organized by Dr. Michael Gillespie, a Visiting Associate Professor in Visual Arts. The series is part of a fall Lewis Center for the Arts course being taught by Gillespie, also titled “Film Blackness,” that is devoted to thinking about the idea of black film with critical attention to film form, film theory, and black visual and expressive culture. The course considers the art of film and the idea of race as irreducible to reality or truth and instead frames the idea of black film as a discursive practice that poses new paradigms for understanding narrative, aesthetics, culture, historiography, and intertextuality.

Gillespie is a film theorist and historian, with an interest in black visual and expressive culture, film theory, genre, visual historiography, global cinema,

adaptation theory, popular music studies, and contemporary art. His recently released book, *Film Blackness: American Cinema and the Idea of Black Film* (Duke University Press, 2016) frames black film alongside literature, music, art, photography, and new media, treating it as an interdisciplinary form that enacts black visual and expressive culture. He is currently Associate Professor of Film at The City College of New York, holding a joint appointment in the Department of Media and Communication Arts and the Black Studies Program.

All five events in the series are open to the public. All except one will take place at the Princeton Garden Theatre starting at 7:30 p.m. Each event will feature a film screening followed by a conversation with one or more artists connected with the film or films shown. The other screenings in the series include:

- *The Fits* (2005) with director Anna Rose Holmer, on Wednesday, October 4, at the James M. Stewart '32 Theater, 185 Nassau Street. Free with no tickets required.
- *Strong Island* (2017) followed by an educational discussion with transgender filmmaker Yance Ford, on Wednesday, October 18.
- Short works by artist-filmmaker Kevin Jerome Everson on Wednesday, November 15.
- Works by filmmakers Ja'Tovia Gary and Frances Bodomo, members of The New Negress Film Society, on Wednesday, November 29.

The film screening series is supported through the John Sacret Young '69 Lecture Series fund. Sacret Young is a 1969 graduate of Princeton and an author, producer, director, and screenwriter. He has been nominated for seven Emmy Awards and seven Writers Guild of America (WGA) Awards, winning two WGA Awards. He is perhaps best known for co-creating, along with William F. Broyles Jr., *China Beach*, the critically acclaimed ABC-TV drama series about medics and nurses during the Vietnam War, and for his work on the television drama *The West Wing*. Young has also received a Golden Globe and a Peabody

Award, and his original mini-series about the Gulf War, *Thanks of a Grateful Nation*, was honored with his fifth Humanitas Prize nomination.

Tickets for the September 20 screening are free for Princeton University students, faculty and staff; show Princeton ID at the Garden Theatre box office to pickup tickets. Public Tickets, \$6-\$11 are available online at www.thegardentheatre.com or in person. The Garden Theatre is located at 160 Nassau Street.

For more information on the Program in Visual Arts and the more than 100 public events presented each year by the Lewis Center for the Arts, visit arts.princeton.edu.

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