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SPECIAL SCREENING OF BUTTERFLY IN THE SKY: A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT READING RAINBOW

WHAT: Aurora Theatre at the Lawrenceville Arts Center, as part of South Arts Southern Circuit of Independent Filmmakers, will be screening BUTTERFLY IN THE SKY.

This documentary tells the story of the beloved PBS children's series "Reading Rainbow," its iconic host LeVar Burton, and the challenges its creators faced in cultivating a love of reading through television. Two seconds into the bubbling synth sounds of the theme song will have a child of the 1980s or '90s exclaiming, "Reading Rainbow!" Such is the beloved nature of the classic children's literary television show that introduced millions of kids to the wonder of books.

Not only did the series insist on having kids speak to kids about

their favorite stories, Reading Rainbow introduced the world to one of the most adored television hosts of all time, LeVar Burton. Thanks to his direct, non-patronizing, and, most importantly, kind delivery, Burton became a conduit to learning for children of every background - delving behind the pages to the people, places, and things each new story explored.

WHEN: Tuesday, February 6th, 7:00 pm

*Immediately after the screening, there will be a Q&A with the film's Co-Director/Editor, Bradford Thomason.

*Beginning at 4:00 pm, come support local booksellers and check out the Library On The Move mobile library van.

WHERE: Lawrenceville Arts Center
Aurora Theatre
Clyde & Sandra Strickland Grand Stage
125 N Clayton St.
Lawrenceville, GA 30046

PRESENTED BY:

This screening is being presented by the Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers, The Lawrenceville Arts Center and its Aurora Theatre, along with the Gwinnett County Public Library.

SPONSORED BY:

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ABOUT: Bradford Thomason (Director / Editor): As a Mexican-American growing up in Houston, TX, I was surrounded by diversity. More than any show on television, *Reading Rainbow* reflected the cultures that surrounded me. I also loved to read but lacked the discipline to do so.

Something about the way the books were represented made me want every single one. When the book fair came to my school, I went straight for the *Reading Rainbow* titles. I didn't know it at the time, but the show's mission statement was manifesting itself in me. I devour books to this day, and I know *Reading Rainbow* had a hand in that.

Brett Whitcomb (Director / Cinematographer): I grew up in the Texas suburbs. Whether I knew it or not, *Reading Rainbow* was my window into the big city and into diverse cultures. New York, where LeVar spent so much time, didn't seem scary like in movies of the time, but instead seemed colorful and full of life. Additionally, with segments like those in "Hill of Fire," "Liang and the Magic Paintbrush," and countless other episodes, *Reading Rainbow* was arguably the first time I encountered "documentary-style" television as a young person, planting a seed that would inspire me for the rest of my life.

We believe *Reading Rainbow* is among the most important shows ever produced and an early example of distance learning before distance learning was on everyone's mind. It's a true unsung hero of children's programming, and we want more than anything to tell its story in a way that honors its legacy and teaches a new generation about this important milestone in television history. - **Bradford & Brett**

FILM SUBJECTS:

LeVar Burton (*Reading Rainbow* Host)

From his calming yet authoritative voice, to his enthusiastic yet authentic love of reading, to his trademark earring and mustache, both of which caused controversy for network heads throughout *Reading Rainbow's* 26 years, LeVar is *Reading Rainbow*. He's an accomplished actor whose early role as Kunta Kinte in the beloved "Roots" mini-series showed him the power of television, and whose 15 year turn as Geordi La Forge on "Star-Trek: The Next Generation" made him a cult hero. Still reading to this day with his podcast, "LeVar Burton Read," LeVar's journey with *Reading Rainbow* from host to executive producer to

educational icon is the heart of the story and an inspiring tale of success against the odds.

Twila Liggett (*Reading Rainbow* Creator / Producer)

Twila Liggett is the beating heart behind *Reading Rainbow*. Her educational background inspired the creation of the show and she was the one who hustled against the grain to find funding throughout the show's run.

Larry Lancit & Cecily Truett Lancit (*Reading Rainbow* Directors / Producers)

A husband and wife production duo, Larry and Cecily directed and produced over 30 episodes together, and continued to produce the show for nearly 20 years. As young newlyweds, they were instrumental in the development of the show's format and in finding its host, LeVar Burton.

Tony Buttino (*Reading Rainbow* Co-creator and Executive Producer)

Instrumental in the creation of *Reading Rainbow*, former WNED-TV vice president Tony Buttino was among the first to express concern over the summer reading loss phenomenon. It was his vision of the show and pursuit of the perfect team that got things moving in the early days.

Steve Horelick (*Reading Rainbow* Composer)

Along with Tina Fabrique, Steve Horelick is responsible for *Reading Rainbow's* theme song among hundreds of others featured on the show. A modular synthesizer devotee and electronic music pioneer, his contributions to the series cannot be overstated.

Ed Wiseman (*Reading Rainbow* Director / Producer)

Next to Cecily and Larry, Ed is the most prolific director and producer in *Reading Rainbow* history. He won 8 Emmys for his work on the show and his personal mission always aligned with that of *Reading Rainbow* - to encourage a lifelong love of reading.

Ellen Schecter (*Reading Rainbow* Writer)

Ellen wrote over 20 episodes of *Reading Rainbow* and helped establish the

show's empathetic, inspiring and non-condescending tone. She was also responsible for the children's book reviews, a favorite segment amongst *Reading Rainbow* fans.

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES:

Bradford Thomason & Brett Whitcomb (Director / Producers)

Bradford Thomason & Brett Whitcomb are a filmmaking team with a catalog that oscillates between archive-rich nostalgic portraits of pop culture, compelling stories of female empowerment, and observational snapshots of under-explored cultures.

Their acclaimed film *GLOW: The Story of the Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling* premiered at Hot Docs in 2012. The Village Voice called it "a beautiful and touching documentary," and the film itself helped inspire the hit Netflix series *GLOW*.

A Life in Waves, which explores the life and career of electronic music pioneer Suzanne Ciani, premiered at SXSW in 2017 and was distributed by Hulu.

Their most recent feature, *Jasper Mall*, premiered at Slamdance in 2020 and was released on Amazon Prime and PBS.

Bryan Storkel (Producer)

Byran Storkel is best known for producing *The Legend of Cocaine Island* (Netflix) and producing/writing *Alabama Snake* (HBO). He also directed the ESPN 30-for-30 film *The Bad Boy of Bowling* and an Emmy-nominated episode of HBO's *State of Play*. Storkel's latest directing venture is *The Pez Outlaw*, which premiered at SXSW 2022 and won a Special Jury Prize in the documentary competition.

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