



The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister to open the 24th BFI London Lesbian & Gay Film Festival

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

London, Friday 29 January: We are delighted to give you an exclusive early announcement of this year's Opening Night feature for the 24th BFI London Lesbian & Gay Film Festival. The Festival opens on Thursday 17 March with the world premiere of ***The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister***.

James Kent's outstanding new drama has been commissioned by BBC2 and written by **Jane English**, it stars **Maxine Peake** (*Criminal Justice*) as Anne Lister, with a superb supporting cast including **Anna Madeley** (*Affinity*) and **Susan Lynch** (*Elizabeth: The Golden Age*).

An early 19th century Yorkshire landowner, industrialist, traveller and prolific diarist, Anne Lister was also a lesbian. Writing in symbols and metaphor that have taken 150 years to fully decipher, she poured out her emotions and the passions she felt for the women in her life in coded journals which form the basis of this true story.

A bold and honest depiction of the secret history of our lesbian past, *Anne Lister* places lesbian sexuality in the heart of Brönte country, where it had always existed unnoticed - until now.

The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister is produced by **Mark Bentley**, executive produced by **Nicolas Kent** and **Simon Rockell** for Oxford Film and Television and Jamie Laurenson for the BBC and is scheduled for transmission in late spring.

Brian Robinson, Senior Programmer LLGFF: "It's great to be opening the festival with the World Premiere of a new British film. James Kent has taken the thrilling story of Anne Lister and revealed the hidden history of a lesbian pioneer whose secret journals in code form the basis for this rare insight into same-sex love at this early date. Maxine Peake gives a vibrant performance and is supported by a superb cast."

James Kent, Director: "Anne Lister reminds us how passion and self-belief is the stuff of life. As a director it was inspirational to find Anne so alive in the script - her taste for real danger, self-destruction and bloody-minded triumph shone through."

The London Lesbian & Gay Film Festival is presented by the BFI. It is the largest lesbian and gay film festival in Europe and last year had over 28,000 admissions. Opening and Closing Nights are held in London's Leicester Square, with most other screenings and events taking place at BFI Southbank. This year we are also collaborating with Tate Modern, V&A and Curzon Soho. The 2010 programme features award-winning titles from the world's leading festivals (Berlin, Cannes and Toronto) alongside some key world premieres. Documentaries continue to form an important part of the programme and archive rediscoveries include performances by Dusty Springfield (many unseen since original transmission) alongside rare TV drama.

The full programme for the 24th BFI London Lesbian & Gay Film Festival will be announced on Thursday 11 February.

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