



Press release

For immediate release

OIFFA IS READY TO REVEAL THE ROUSING PROGRAM OF ITS ALL-INSPIRING, ALL-VIRTUAL 5th EDITION

Ottawa, June 1, 2022 — The Ottawa Indian Film Festival Awards (OIFFA) is excited to present the rich and diverse program of its all virtual 5th edition. We are pleased to be launching this new edition, on June 14, with Opening Film *Naanera* by Rajasthani director Deepankar Prakash, who is back to OIFFA after the success of his previous film, *The Mouse (Mooso)*. The Closing Film will be Kerala director Don Palathara's *Joyful Mystery (Santhoshathinte Onnam Rahasyam)* on June 18. We are looking forward to these five days of festivities centered around a strong competition of contemporary, independent Indian films. We are extremely pleased to offer you a selection of the best, most varied, award-winning films from many distinct regions of the country. The Festival takes place entirely ONLINE from June 14 to 18, 2022.

The Competition this year encompasses 14 features (fiction) and 5 short films focusing on stories from all over India, from the crowded apartment complexes of Pune to the remote villages of Karnataka and Manipur, and the labyrinthine wildlife preserves of Tamil Nadu. In total, the Festival is proud to present a unique, varied and eye-opening line-up made up of true discoveries, including no fewer than 8 debut feature films as well as a remarkable number of female filmmakers and subjects. Details about the whole program follow. Film stills offer but a sampling of what we have in store for you.

OPENING AND CLOSING FILMS



The Festival's Opening Film will be *Naanera* (top photo) by writer/director Deepankar Prakash, author of last year's OIFFA award-winning *The Mouse (Mooso)*. With his usual humanistic zeal and knack for soothing visual landscapes, Prakash tells the story of a man whose independence comes undone after the death of his father, prompting his uncles to start taking over his life decisions. Part romance, as Manish starts a secret romance with his cousin, part family drama, as his peers face the death of yet another loved one, *Naanera* is a fully kindhearted exploration of Rajasthani mores and landscapes.

The Festival's *Joyful Mystery (Santhoshathinte Onnam)* (bottom photo), directed by Don Palathara, tells a timely tale about the pitfalls of amorous and the evolving roles of women in India. It closely follows a young journalist boyfriend as they make their way to a doctor's office to find out whether she is pregnant with his baby. Shot during the COVID pandemic, *Joyful Mystery* is quite a technical achievement from documentarian Palathara, a staple at the Moscow International Film Festival and a very acute observer of both the social and individual practices of his people. Both films are also in Competition.



Closing Film, *Rahasyam* Palathara, tells a story of a woman's relationships contemporary and her actor boyfriend as they make their way to a doctor's office to find out whether she is pregnant with his baby. Shot in a single take during the COVID pandemic, *Joyful Mystery* is also quite a technical achievement from seasoned Kerala documentarian Palathara, a staple at the Moscow International Film Festival and a very acute observer of both the social and individual practices of his people. Both films are also in Competition.

COMPETITION



Aside from the Opening and Closing Films, the Competition of OIFFA's 5th edition includes twelve (12) other FEATURE FILMS: Raajhorshee De's large-scale family drama *Abbar Kanchanjangha* is inspired by the cinema of Satyajit Ray and features 17 top Bengali actors; Abhilash Shetty's *The Chicken Curry (Koli Taal)* takes a slightly comedic slant on the old Karnataka tradition of serving guests a prime rooster for dinner; Sagar Puranik's *Dollu* (photo 1) pits tradition against modernity through the story of Bhadra, a traditional drummer and dancer who wishes to reunite

his old team from the city to honour the decades-old traditions of his village; Tara Ramanujan's debut *Forbidden (Nishiddho)* recounts the unlikely kinship between an ex-idol maker from Kolkata and a tough Tamil midwife; *Life is Suffering. Death is*



Salvation. by Arvind Pratap, is a humanistic foray into the lonely, isolated world of an old dairy farmer who just lost his son; *Mahananda* (photo 2) from



popular filmmaker Arindam Sil, is a fictionalized homage to the great activist Mahasweta Devi; Haobam Paban Kumar's *Nine Hills One Valley* evokes the futility and barbarism of ethnic conflict through the journey of a Tangkhul man travelling to Imphal City; in Mehul Agaja's *Niwaas*, we discover how two old

men's friendship can be strong enough to withstand even death; with *The Road to Kuthriyar*, director Bharat Mirle invites us to explore the luxuriant Kokaidanal Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu and to bask in the soothing simplicity of rural life; Chittaranjan Giri's *The Space (Awakash)* focuses on the interior struggle of a Pune woman forced to reconsider the social values that have moulded her and her sister's upbringing; also set in Pune, *A Vicious Circle (Vartul)* by Shirkant Mukund Choudhari is a white-knuckle thriller about a couple faced with a dangerous home invader; finally, Atal Krishnan's *Woman with a Movie Camera* (photo 3) tackles the daily hardships of Indian women head-on through its honest, documentary-style approach.

Five (5) SHORT FILMS are also included in the Competition: Ashish Madurwar redefines the notion of normalcy through the story of a gender-bending couple in *A Bit of Happiness (Thodi Si Khushi)*; Sudipto Acharyya's *Coda* tells of a London musician's infatuation with the utopian lifestyle and people of Auroville in Tamil Nadu; *Geru Patra* by Shristipal Singh recounts the struggle of a 27-year-old typist with the authorities who confiscated his typewriter for seditious activities; with Sainath S. Uskaikar's *Place of Sacrifice (Wagro)*, the spectator shares a villager's last moments in his hometown before he leaves for the city; lastly, COVID-19 takes centre stage once more in Azad Alam's *Together*, in which the author explores the forced changes in interpersonal and class dynamics provoked by a shared crisis.

JURY

A jury of three (3) professionals will award the Festival's various prizes, i.e. Best Feature Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Actor, Best Actress and Best Short Film. The members of the prestigious 2022 jury are: from Egypt, **Mariam Hamdy** (filmmaker, professor, and festival programmer); from Portugal, **Carlos Coelho Costa** (professor and producer, founder of Produtora Megalito Media); and from India, returning from last year's stint, **Premendra Mazumder** (film critic and Vice-President of the Federation of Film Societies of India). The awards will be announced ONLINE on June 18, as the event closes.

TICKETS AND TICKET INFORMATION

OIFFA's schedule and information on all the films, including trailers, are available **ONLINE NOW** at **oiffa.com**. Details about the entire program can also be found online.

Tickets for the event can be purchased on the Festival's website at oiffa.com.

All screenings will take place on the Festival's online CineSend platform, accessible through our website.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

OIFFA is made possible through the support of its many partners. The Festival wishes to thank its sponsors, media partners and community partners, all of whom can be found at oiffa.com on the homepage. **OIFFA** would also like to thank all its collaborators, suppliers and volunteers as well as all participating filmmakers and artisans for their precious contribution to the success of this 5th edition of the Festival.

ABOUT OIFFA

OIFFA is the National Capital's and Eastern Canada's preeminent festival dedicated to Indian cinema and all things Indian with its **OFFICIAL COMPETITION** and **SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS** sections open to filmmakers from India and the Indian diaspora as well as films featuring Indian content. In its 5th year now, the Festival is extremely pleased to continue to cultivate an audience for Indian cinema and Indian culture not only in Ottawa, but throughout Canada and North American, thanks to the magic of the CineSend online screening platform.

For more information, go to www.oiffa.com | Follow the latest **OIFFA news on Facebook and Twitter**

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