



Press release

For immediate release

OIFFA REVEALS THE FULL PROGRAM OF ITS EXCITING NEW LIVE EDITION

Ottawa, June 7, 2023 — OIFFA (The **Ottawa Indian Film Festival Awards**) is proud to present the full program of its 6th edition, a celebratory, back-to-theatre event unfolding at the Landmarks Cinemas in Kanata and the VIP Cineplex Cinemas Lansdowne in downtown Ottawa.

The festivities begin on June 13 with the screening of our Opening Film, *Footprints on Water*, by up-and-coming director Nathalia Syam. They conclude on June 17, with the presentation of our Closing Film, *Siya*, by first-time director Manish Mundra. We are excited to partake in these five days of LIVE screenings showcasing a strong competition of contemporary, independent films. It is an honour for us to provide a selection of the best, most varied and praised films from distinct regions of the country and the Indian diaspora. The Festival takes place entirely LIVE from June 13 to 17, 2023.

Competing this year is a thrilling lineup of 13 fiction features and 4 short films, featuring stories from all over India and the Indian diaspora, from the back streets of Birmingham, UK, to the holy city of Varanasi, by way of Assam's lush tea gardens and the quiet Christian monasteries of Kerala. The Festival's selection provides a comprehensive, insightful look at contemporary Indian cinema, 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



As announced on June 1, the Festival's Opening Film will be *Footprints on Water* (top photo) by London-based director Nathalia Syam, who aims to depict the dark side of illegal Indian immigration in the most realistic way possible. By focusing on a poor man's quest to find his runaway daughter in the back streets of bustling Birmingham, Syam manages to merge elements of social and family drama into a meaningful, enlightening narrative that speaks both of today and the undying values of yesterday.

The Festival's Closing Film, *Siya* (bottom photo), directed by producer turned director Manish Mundra, tells the story of a teenage girl from Uttar Pradesh who struggles to find justice after being raped by a local politician. At once a heart-wrenching and opportune effort, the film addresses not only the larger problem of sexual abuse, but the judicial failings of a system that protects the abusers instead of the victims. It is a study of helplessness, and as such, it aims to anger the viewers into an urgent conversation about the endless hardships of sexual assault survivors. Both films are in competition.



COMPETITION



Aside from the Opening and Closing Films, **OIFFA 2023's** Competition is comprised of eleven (11) other **FEATURE FILMS**: Reema Borah's *The Resonance (Anunaad)*, about the tragedy of "paros", or purchased brides, taken from their homes in the lush green fields of Assam to wintry Haryana; *The Bird of Passage (Karmanye)* (photo 1) by Harsh Chauhan takes us on a wicked musician's journey of self-discovery through the holy city of Varanasi; Champa P. Shetty's *Chicken Curry (Koli Esru)* focuses on a poor villager's quest to provide her

daughter with the titular delicacy after being deprived of motherly love as a child; *The Faded Footprints (Lokkhir Paa)*, Abhik Das's debut feature, is set against the backdrop of the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War as a newlywed couple's affection grows over the course of a revelatory cross-country journey; *Follower* by Harshad Nalawade is a pulse-pounding political drama about the murderous excesses of identity politics in a divided urban community; Arvind

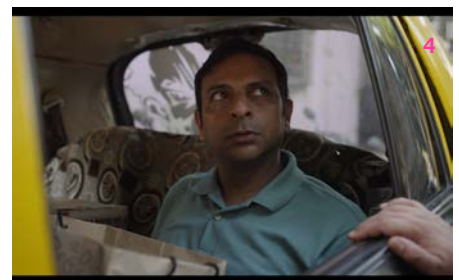


Pratap's *Mariam* tackles the issue of illegal surrogacy by focusing on a poor woman's efforts to support her family during the COVID pandemic; *Muthayya* (photo 2) is director Bhaskhar Maurya's debut feature, and it tells the tragicomic effort of an old villager to achieve his dream of becoming a famous actor; in Kuldip Patel's *Powai*, the lives of three women from different socioeconomic backgrounds intersect in subtle but revelatory ways; *The Quarrel (Vazhakku)* by acclaimed director Sanal Kumar Sasidharan, showcases a life-changing encounter between a lawyer on the verge of divorce and a woman fleeing her own marriage because of domestic abuse; set



in a Capuchin monastery in Kerala, Sunny Joseph's *Salt of the Earth (Bhoomiyude Uppu)* (photo 3) recounts the uneasy relationship between a devout novice and the mysterious female scholar who inadvertently undermines his faith; in Prithvi Konanur's *Seventeeners (Hadinelentu)*, a leaked sex tape proves to be a major problem for a poor Dalit college student, much more so than for her privileged Brahmin lover.

Four (4) **SHORT FILMS** are also included in this year's Competition: Sujatha Rajashekar tells the touching story of a forbidden relationship between a lonely housewife and a doll in *Ankahi Baatein*; Ravi Muppa's *Incognito* is a Hitchcockian thriller about a voyeuristic motel receptionist who unwittingly becomes entangled in a sex trafficking affair; *The Journey Back Home (Birha)* by Puneet Prakash tackles the devastating consequences of an ambitious young villager's immature actions; with Asmit Pathare's *Two Way Street* (photo 4), the spectator shares a nail-biting cab ride with a bigoted taximan and the headstrong victim of his discriminating views.



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 this prestigious jury for this year are: from Armenia, **Armine Anda** (filmmaker, illustrator and novelist); from Sweden, **Alexandra Enberg** (filmmaker, professor, programmer and film critic); and from India, our returning alumni, **Premendra Mazumder** (film critic and Vice-President of the Federation of Film Societies of India). The awards will be announced in person, before the screening of the Closing Film, on June 17.

SHORT FILM CHALLENGES

This year also marks the return of the Festival's hugely popular 72-Hour Short Film Challenge (open to anyone over 18 years of age), which will be in its 4th year after the enforced break of the pandemic. And to celebrate this return to form, **OIFFA** has decided to add a second event, the Youth Short Film Challenge, this one open to anyone under 17 years of age. The former began on June 1 and the participants had, yes, 72 hours to complete their works; the latter started on May 21, giving two weeks to the challengers to complete their films. Both Challenges were concluded on June 4. Each Challenge presented a mandatory theme and a length to the filmmakers, and were thrown a curve ball after they started working on their films with an element they had to find a way of including in their works. The resulting creations will be screened at the VIP Cineplex Cinemas Lansdowne on June 17.

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 at the Landmarks Cinemas in Kanata (801 Kanata Ave) or the VIP Cineplex Cinemas Lansdowne (325 Marche Way). Check the film listings on our website for more information about the venues. Parking is free to festival-goers for the duration of a film screening.

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 6th 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 6th year now, the Festival is extremely pleased to continue to cultivate an audience for Indian cinema and Indian culture in Ottawa.

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

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