

BFI Southbank celebrate master filmmaker Satyajit Ray with complete retrospective this summer



SATYAJIT RAY: THE LANGUAGE OF FILM

BFI Southbank 1 July – 31 August

Wednesday 8 June 2022, London.

The BFI today announces the full programme for **SATYAJIT RAY: THE LANGUAGE OF FILM**, a season celebrating one of the true masters of world cinema. Satyajit Ray's centenary in 2021, as well as 75 years of Indian independence, mark a timely juncture to showcase his complete body of remarkable work including his 'Apu Trilogy' **PATHER PANCHALI** (1955), **APARAJITO** (1956) and **THE WORLD OF APU** (1959), **THE MUSIC ROOM** (1958), **THE LONELY WIFE** (1964), **DAYS AND NIGHTS IN THE FOREST** (1970) and many more. Programmed thematically by **Sangeeta Datta**, the season is presented in association with the **Academy Film Archive** and will include numerous restorations on 35mm from their archives, as well as three 4K restorations made by the Criterion Collection and the UK premiere of four brand new 4K restorations presented by NFDC – National Film Archive of India.

One of the highlights of the season will be a BFI re-release of **THE BIG CITY** (1963), in selected cinemas UK-wide from **22 July** and screening on extended run at BFI Southbank. Set in mid-50s Calcutta, in a society still adjusting to Independence and gripped by social and financial crisis, this powerful,

progressive cinema classic sees a middle-class housewife brilliantly and excitingly defy expectations and find herself becoming a successful businesswoman.

There will be a screening of Ray's adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's short stories **THE POSTMASTER** and **SAMAPTI** (1961) on **7 July** introduced by **Aparna Sen**, who made her screen debut in the latter, and has since become India's greatest and longest-standing female writer-director. Sen will also make an appearance at BFI Southbank as part of this year's **LONDON INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL** on **2 July**, with an **In Conversation** event followed by a screening of her powerful new film **THE RAPIST** (2021).

Sangeeta Datta will give a richly illustrated talk to introduce audiences to the films screening and their thematic curation, as well as offering close analysis of key titles in **THE FILM LANGUAGE OF SATYAJIT RAY** on **6 July**. Ray's recurring themes will be highlighted alongside his filmmaking style, with contributions on Ray's work from expert speakers, including those working in the Indian film industry today. There will also be an afternoon of talks and discussions offering different approaches to appreciating Ray, and looking at his influences and legacy: **SATYAJIT RAY: HIS HOME AND THE WORLD** on **16 July** will welcome expert speakers who will trace key themes in his work including the city and what it represents, the women in his films, the use of music (often composed by Ray himself), and the development of his distinctive cinematic language.

BFI MEMBERS BOOK CLUB: SATYAJIT RAY will take place in the **BFI Reuben Library** on **15 August** offering BFI Members a chance to explore, alongside the BFI's expert collections team, the wealth of literature charting Ray's impact on Indian cinema, alongside a journey through his fascinating life. BFI Southbank's **FILM WALLAHS** series, which showcases new South Asian and world cinema, is programmed in homage to Satyajit Ray in July; **RAAHGIR** (Goutam Ghose, 2019), screening on **11 July**, is an epic and elemental journey through a relentless monsoon that follows a man and woman driven by hunger to search for work in the nearest town. Screening with **RAAHGIR** will be a selection of short films commissioned as part of the UK Asian Film Festival's 2021 Ray of Hope competition. These nine winners will showcase their three-minute shorts inspired by the work of Satyajit Ray.

A master of his craft and generous in spirit, Satyajit Ray remains a classic star of world cinema. He hailed from a progressive, literary family in Bengal and his films document the journey of a nation from colonial to post-colonial, tradition to modernity, from changing generations of fathers to sons, and shifting relations in times of crisis or rupture. A polymath who scripted, designed, composed and directed, Ray offered enduring glimpses of life itself through his poetic treatment of story. He used

exquisite dramatic detail, original music scores and some of the finest actors to weave small narratives that held larger worlds in their fold. Often adapting the work of Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore, Ray's focus on female characters work saw him from the self-possessed, ambitious or resilient to those weighed down by the pressures of patriarchy, the lonely and the repressed; but in each he imbues a depth and richness that makes their story compelling. His dramas grapple with the caste system and Dalit exploitation, the remnants of empire and the politics of everyday life.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ACADEMY FILM ARCHIVE



Season listings, including details of the various restorations, are available [here](#), with the complete programme detailed below.

COMPLETE SEASON PROGRAMME BY THEME

OF FATHERS AND SONS

Ray captures the poetry and continuum of life as generations pass

- Ray chose a small family in a poor village to tell the story of rural Bengal and the great migration to cities in **PATHER PANCHALI** (1955). Filmed outside Calcutta on weekends, Ray's collaboration with Subrata Mitra (camera) and Ravi Shankar (music) put Indian cinema on the global map, and made Apu an enduring cultural figure.
- In the second part of the Apu trilogy, **APARAJITO** (1956), Ray captures the pulsating spirit of the ancient city of Varanasi where Apu grows from child to adolescent; after his father's death, Apu leaves to study in Calcutta, insensitive to his mother's hard work to find money.
- The final part of the Apu trilogy **THE WORLD OF APU** (1959) was planned after wide critical acclaim for the first two. Here, Ray explores a tender and enduring romance with young adult Apu and his accidental child-bride Aparna, played by Soumitra Chatterjee and Sharmila Tagore respectively, both in their screen debuts.
- Ray examines family structures as an old-world patriarch falls ill and his sons rush in from the city in **BRANCHES OF THE TREE** (1990). The father, a man of principles, is devastated to learn that his sons have accepted corruption and greed along with material success.

THE BIG CITY

Films set in contemporary Calcutta, where people seem to lose their moral bearings

- The BFI re-release of **THE BIG CITY** (1963), in selected cinemas UK-wide from **22 July** and screening on extended run at BFI Southbank, is a powerful, progressive classic that sees a middle-class housewife defy expectations to become a successful businesswoman.
- The first of Ray's Calcutta trilogy, **THE ADVERSARY** (1970), is set in the turbulent years of the communist Naxalite movement of the late 1960s. Siddhartha is a middle-class college graduate in search of a job amid the social turmoil. Alienated from his communist brother and his socially ambitious sister, his appearance at a farcical job interview plays out as dark comedy.
- The second of Ray's Calcutta trilogy **COMPANY LIMITED** (1971) follows Shyamal, an ambitious sales manager who introduces his sister-in-law to 'the good life' on a tour of swinging Calcutta with its clubs, salons, race-courses, restaurants and cabaret dancers.
- Ray's darkest city film **THE MIDDLEMAN** (1975) – the final part of his Calcutta trilogy – explores the collapse of the middle-class economy and of moral standards; Somnath steps out from his secure family world into a quagmire of corrupt businessmen, hustlers and sex traffickers.
- When a long-lost uncle announces his arrival in **THE STRANGER** (1991), a middle class couple are confused and suspicious. Ray raises larger questions about identity, bourgeois society and suspicion about strangers.

FANTASIES AND DETECTIVES

Ray's adaptations of popular fantasy stories, and his own detective Feluda fiction

- Ray's first fantasy film, **THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE** (1958), based on a short story by Rajshekhar Basu, has veteran comedian Tulsi Chakraborty play a middle-class clerk, who discovers a stone that turns objects to gold.
- **THE ZOO** (1967) is a crime thriller, adapted from Saradindu Bandopadhyay's popular detective series that sees matinee idol Uttam Kumar play detective Byomkesh Bakshy – offering a perfect bonanza for the Bengali audience.
- Two village simpletons are granted three boons by the King of Ghosts in **THE ADVENTURES OF GOOPY AND BAGHA** (1968); Ray's adaptation of his grandfather's fantasy tale is timeless in its charm, scathing in its anti-war message and viewing the film today gives it new relevance in a conflict-ridden world.

- The sequel to THE ADVENTURES OF GOOPY AND BAGHA, **THE KINGDOM OF DIAMONDS** (1980) sees Goopy and Bagha arrive in the Kingdom of Diamonds to find a despot who has a brainwashing machine that replaces original thoughts with rhyming slogans.
- Ray adapts his own novel **THE GOLDEN FORTRESS** (1974) about Feluda, the popular detective, and his teenage cousin Tapeshe. The action is set in Rajasthan and involves kidnappers, scorpions, magicians, knife throwers, and a famous camel-ride over sand dunes.
- A follow-up to THE GOLDEN FORTRESS, **JOI BABA FELUNATH** (1978) is a mystery tale with a delightful ensemble cast that once again features clever detective Feluda. While holidaying in the city of Benaras, Feluda is approached by the wealthy Ghoshal family to find the stolen family heirloom, a golden Ganesh statue.

THE WOMAN QUESTION

Ray's films sought to represent women's lives across every facet of Indian culture

- Ray's darkest film, about superstition and blind faith, **THE GODDESS** (1960) features a stunning turn by Sharmila Tagore as a young bride living in a 19th-century feudal mansion. When her father-in-law dreams she is a goddess that can perform miracles, events spin out of control.
- Commissioned for French television, **PIKOO** (1980) sees Ray adapt a story from his book 'Pikoo's Diary and Other Stories'. On a balmy afternoon, 6-year-old Pikoo draws flowers in the garden, unaware of his mother's liaison and his grandfather dying in another room.
- To mark Rabindranath Tagore's centenary year, Ray adapted three short stories by the writer for **THREE DAUGHTERS** (1961). In POSTMASTER, a young man from Calcutta arrives as postmaster of a small village and soon forms a bond with an orphan girl. In MONIHARA, the spirit of a man's dead wife wanders their house in search of her lost jewels. SAMAPTI marks Aparna Sen's delightful debut as a teenage tomboy who experiences a change of heart after rejecting her new husband.
- Ray adapts Tagore's short story of a nineteenth century, liberal, upper-class family and a complex web of relationships and emotions in **THE LONELY WIFE** (1964). Neglected housewife Charulata's latent ambition for writing is stirred by her brother-in-law, with whom she becomes infatuated.
- Set in the chaotic aftermath of the disastrous 1905 partition of Bengal into Muslim and Hindu states, **THE HOME AND THE WORLD** (1984) follows progressive landlord Nikhilesh, who finds his wife Bimala's attentions stolen by his more passionate and charismatic revolutionary friend Sandip. But events soon overtake them and Bimala is faced with deciding her future.

TRAVEL STORIES

Ray excelled at capturing both urban and rural life

- In **KANCHENJANGHA** (1962), a delightful ensemble cast play a family vacationing in Darjeeling. Chhabi Biswas' overbearing patriarch fails to see his older daughter in a troubled marriage and the younger resisting her tiresome suitor.
- Ray's adaptation of Tarashankar Banerjee's novel **THE EXPEDITION** (1962) finds Soumitra Chatterjee cast against type as a reckless taxi driver obsessed with his car. When he loses his license, Narsingh falls in with an opium smuggler.
- In **THE COWARD** (1965), Soumitra Chatterjee plays a screenwriter who accepts the kindness of a stranger only to find he is the husband of an old flame. He attempts to rekindle their relationship, only to be reminded how it ended.
- Ray's cynicism about spiritual gurus and imposters finds rich material in Rajshekhar Basu's satirical short story **THE HOLY MAN** (1965), about an advocate and his daughter who fall under the sway of a self-professed healer who claims to be ageless.
- **THE HERO** (1966) is an exploration of the price of stardom, featuring Bengali mega-star Uttam Kumar in a career-best performance. A matinee idol is travelling by train from Calcutta to Delhi – along the way he opens up to a journalist, revealing a troubled and insecure man.
- Ray's adaptation of Sunil Ganguly's story **DAYS AND NIGHTS IN THE FOREST** (1969) finds four friends from very different backgrounds taking a trip to a forest, where they are forced to examine their frivolous urban views and sensibilities.

HISTORIES OF THE LAND

Unravelling the relationship between a people and the world they live in

- An aged feudal lord's obsession with his past glory and his music room, is powerfully conveyed by the don of early Bengali cinema, Chhabi Biswas, in **THE MUSIC ROOM** (1958). A compelling psychological and class drama, interspersed with riveting music and dance performances.
- Adapted from Munshi Premchand's story, Ray once again places two individuals trapped in the vortex of history in **THE CHESS PLAYERS** (1977). Ruling Nawab Wajed Ali Shah, a poet and lover of arts, is ordered to step down by Lord Outram. As that feud plays out on a national stage, two feudal friends play chess, oblivious to the changes taking place around them.
- In **DISTANT THUNDER** (1973), Ray returns to the Bengal village during the Second World War, when man-made famine and pestilence killed five million people. Seen through the eyes of the

village teacher-doctor, the epic scale of human tragedy is all the more palpable through Ray's focus on a microcosm of this world.

- Made for national television in Hindi, **DELIVERANCE** (1981) is a searing story about caste exploitation in rural India, resulting in Ray's bleakest film. Low caste untouchable Dukhi is ordered by an upper caste Brahmin priest to cut trees in the scorching midday sun.
- A late masterpiece, produced while Ray was ill, **ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE** (1989) is a biting drama about a doctor fighting religious bigotry when he discovers that temple water is contaminated and people are falling ill. Soumitra Chatterjee's everyman attempts to take a stand, but soon finds the entire town turning against him.

DOCUMENTARIES

Subjects close to Satyajit Ray's heart

- The first of two programmes of documentaries by Ray will include **RABINDRANATH TAGORE** (1961) about the writer-artist-composer-philosopher who was crucially important to Ray. Ray described his art teacher, the blind artist Benode Behari Mukherjee, as the 'finest living Indian painter', with whom he had a series of intimate conversations during the making of **THE INNER EYE** (1972). Ray's documentary **SUKUMAR RAY** (1987) about his father, the popular author-illustrator of Bengali nonsense verse and humorous writings, includes photographs, drawings, and dramatisations of his work.
- The second documentary programme will feature **BALA**, Ray's only documentary on classical dance, about Balasaraswati, who was, according to Ray, 'the greatest Bharat Natyam dancer ever'. Commissioned by the Chogyal (King) of Sikkim at a time when he felt the sovereignty of his state was threatened by China and India, Ray made the magnificent documentary **SIKKIM** (1971). It was banned by the Indian government after Sikkim merged with India in 1975. Completing this programme will be **TWO** (1965), a short film produced by Esso World Theater, that sees two children, one rich, the other poor, encounter each other through a window.

– ENDS –

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Complete listings for the season are available [here](#).

Health and safety measures continue at BFI Southbank, with up to date guidance available on the [BFI website](#).

On-sale dates: Tickets for screenings in July are on sale to BFI Patrons and Champions on 6 June, BFI Members on 7 June and to the general public on 9 June. Screenings in August will be on sale to BFI Patrons and Champions on 4 July, BFI Members on 5 July and to the general public on 7 July.

ABOUT THE BFI

We are a cultural charity, a National Lottery distributor, and the UK's lead organisation for film and the moving image.

Our mission is:

- To support creativity and actively seek out the next generation of UK storytellers
- To grow and care for the BFI National Archive, the world's largest film and television archive
- To offer the widest range of UK and international moving image culture through our programmes and festivals - delivered online and in venue
- To use our knowledge to educate and deepen public appreciation and understanding of film and the moving image
- To work with Government and industry to ensure the continued growth of the UK's screen industries

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Tim Richards.

***** PICTURE DESK *****

A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank are available via the links below:

Venue images: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/sg9feacjyob1qid/AADly1HNkyhmBpdK42EqQqlqa?dl=0>

Film stills: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/m8iq614jmn21si/AAD_Et5OySDYNxgWCSwF_oSJa?dl=0

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