

SONG OF LAHORE

Press Notes

2015, 82 Min, USA

Produced and Directed by Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy and Andy Schocken

A Ravi Films Production

www.songoflahore.com

Song of Lahore is Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy's first release since she won an Academy Award for Saving Face. She is Pakistan's first Academy Award winner. This is Andy Schocken's directorial debut.

Logline

Song of Lahore follows several Pakistani classical musicians, and asks if there is room for them in a society roiled by conflict. An unexpected jazz album brings international acclaim and a performance with Wynton Marsalis at Jazz at Lincoln Center, but will they ever find an audience at home?

Brief Synopsis

Song of Lahore examines the lives and the cultural heritage of Pakistan's classical musicians, and asks whether there is still room for them in a society roiled by social and religious upheaval. After toiling in obscurity for years, an innovative album leads Sachal Studios to international acclaim, and a triumphant concert with Wynton Marsalis and his orchestra at Jazz at Lincoln Center. This feature length documentary by Academy Award winning filmmaker Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy and Andy Schocken follows their dramatic journey, and asks if they will ever find an audience at home.

Synopsis

With its ancient palaces and stately gardens, the Lahore of Pakistan's 1947 independence was a haven and a muse for musicians, artists, and poets. The city came alive to the beat of a tabla drum; with a musical culture passed down over centuries and a thriving film industry, opportunities were great for the legion of musicians that called Lahore home.

Today, this vision of Lahore exists only in myth. Islamization, ethnic divisions, war and corruption have torn apart the cultural fabric of Pakistan, and the sounds of the tabla no longer drift through the old city's bazaar.

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BOOKINGS AND INQUIRIES: Mike Boyuk: mike@filmswelike.com
CANADIAN PUBLICITY & MEDIA REQUESTS: mallory@filmswelike.com

Press kit and high rez images: <http://www.filmswelike.com/song-of-lahore>

In 2004, Izzat Majeed founded Sachal Studios to create a space for traditional music in a nation that had rejected its musical roots. After convincing a number of master musicians to pick up their instruments again, they quietly released some classical and folk albums. But it is an experimental album fusing jazz and South Asian instruments that brings Sachal Studios worldwide acclaim. Their rendition of Dave Brubeck's Take Five becomes a sensation, and Wynton Marsalis invites them to New York to perform with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. After a groundbreaking week of rehearsals fusing the orchestras from Lahore and New York, the musicians take to the stage for a remarkable concert.

Despite their rising international acclaim, Sachal Studios remains virtually unknown in Pakistan. The ensemble is faced with a daunting task; to reclaim and reinvigorate an art that has lost its space in Pakistan's narrowing cultural sphere.

Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy's Director's Statement:

I grew up with listening to my grandfather's stories of our musical past. He would often talk about the orchestras that played at concerts and the musicians who played on Sunday evenings on street corners. By the time I grew up in the 1980's all of this was a thing of the past. I lived vicariously through his stories and often wondered what it would have felt like to have been part of his generation.

In 2012, I came across the story of a group of musicians from Lahore who had come together against all odds to record music using Pakistan's traditional instruments and I knew that was a story I wanted to tell. At that time, I had no idea what the group's journey would be, I just wanted to preserve their voices and their music. And what a journey it turned out to be. From Lahore to Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York, these musicians found their inner calling. As our cameras filmed them performing at a sold out concert with Wynton Marsalis, I thought back to my grandfather's stories of our past and knew that I had managed to experience some of those moments that night.

Andy Schocken's Director's Statement:

Ever since coming across the films of Les Blank in my early 20's, I've had an interest in musical heritage and regional cultures. But before beginning work on Song of Lahore, my knowledge of Pakistan didn't extend too far beyond the Qawwali music of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and the narrow perspective of the Western news media. In April 2013, I received a call from Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy asking if I'd like to join the project, and a few weeks later I found myself on a plane bound for Karachi and Lahore.

What I found was a window into a disappearing cultural heritage. For centuries, the arts flourished in Lahore, in symbiotic relations with supportive Muslim regimes, beginning with the Mughal Empire. With the rise of fundamentalist strains of Islam beginning in the 1970s, and the socioeconomic breakdown of contemporary

Pakistani society, the lives of classical musicians have become increasingly tenuous. The Lahori film industry, where many of them had earned a living, was dead. The world famous dancing girls of Lahore were no longer dancing. Many traditional arts, now considered to be sinful, have been pushed to the fringes.

My hopes for Song of Lahore are twofold: that it will present a more nuanced view of the Pakistani people to Western audiences, and that it will help galvanize support for music and the arts in Pakistan. Because for all of the larger themes that the film explores, at its heart is a story about a group of courageous people who have chosen to fight- for a better future for their families, and to preserve the musical heritage that has brought meaning and beauty to their lives.

Crew Biographies

Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy: Producer/Director

Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy is an Academy Award and an Emmy Award winning documentary filmmaker. She has made over a dozen multi award winning films in over 10 countries around the world. Her films include Saving Face, Transgenders: Pakistan's Open Secret and Pakistan's Taliban Generation. Her work has aired on channels spanning 4 continents including, HBO, CNN, PBS, Channel 4, CBC, Arte, SBS and the Discovery channel.

In 2012, Time Magazine included Sharmeen in their annual list of the 100 most influential people in the world. In 2013, the Canadian government awarded Sharmeen a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for her work in the field of documentary films and the World Economic Forum honored her with a Crystal Award at their annual summit in Davos.

Andy Schocken: Producer/Director

Andy Schocken is a documentary filmmaker and cinematographer living in Brooklyn, NY. He was a co-producer and cinematographer for The Last Campaign of Governor Booth Gardner, which was nominated for an Academy Award and aired on HBO. His cinematography credits include recent and upcoming theatrically released documentaries such as Beyond the Brick: A Lego Brickumentary, First Position, Fight Church, and Gerhard Richter Painting. Song of Lahore is his directorial debut. Andy holds a Masters degree in documentary filmmaking from Stanford University and a Bachelors degree from the University of Pennsylvania.

Flávia de Souza: Editor

Flávia de Souza is a documentary editor working in New York City. She edited Open Heart, which was nominated for an Academy Award in 2013, and aired on HBO. Flávia's other documentary credits include The Carrier, and When the Spirits

Mambo. Flávia's work for television includes "Barbosa: The Man Who Made Brazil Cry" for ESPN 30 for 30, and Teenage Witness: The Fanya Heller Story for PBS. She holds a bachelors degree in Industrial and Graphic Design from Rio de Janeiro's State University (UERJ), and a MFA in Photography and Related Media from the School of Visual Arts.

Asad Faruqi: Director of Photography

Asad Faruqi is an Emmy Award nominated cinematographer, photographer and filmmaker based out of Karachi, Pakistan. Over the past six years he has filmed a number of award winning films, including 2011's Academy and Emmy Award winning film, "Saving Face." Some other notable works include Emmy and Alfred I Dupont Award winning, "Pakistan's Taliban Generation," "Transgenders: Pakistan's Open Secret." His work has featured on HBO, The New York Times, PBS, Channel 4, CBC, SBS, Arte among others.

Subject Biographies

Sachal Jazz Ensemble:

The film follows the story of Sachal Studios, a group of classically trained musicians who used to work in the Pakistani film industry. When the film and music industries declined in the wake of increasingly conservative Muslim laws and social customs in Pakistan, many of these musicians found themselves out of work. They were brought together at Sachal Studios by Izzat Majeed, who built the studio in order to preserve these musical traditions. After releasing a number of South Asian classical and folk albums with little fanfare, they released an album covering Western jazz standards with their traditional instruments, such as the sitar, flute and tablas. It became a surprise hit, as the video for their arrangement of Dave Brubeck's Take Five went viral. The media coverage that followed led to their invitation to perform with Wynton Marsalis at Jazz At Lincoln Center.

Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra:

The world-renowned Jazz at Lincoln Center is dedicated to preserving and growing the musical legacy of jazz, and expanding the form through innovative cross-cultural collaborations. The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, led by Wynton Marsalis, is made up of 15 of the finest soloists, ensemble players, and arrangers in jazz music today. Wynton Marsalis is a Grammy and Pulitzer Award winning artist, whose body of work places him among the world's finest musicians and composers.

Dave Brubeck and the Jazz Ambassadors:

The founder of Sachal Studios, Izzat Majeed, was first exposed to jazz as a young boy, when Dave Brubeck performed in Lahore in 1958. Brubeck was one of the jazz

greats that went on tour around the world in a State Department program that came to be known as the Jazz Ambassadors. The goal was to further American social and political goals through cultural diplomacy during the time of the Cold War. During that era, musicians such as Brubeck, Dizzy Gillespie, and Duke Ellington performed in Lahore, leaving a cultural legacy that is echoed in the Sachal Jazz Ensemble/Jazz at Lincoln Center collaboration that is at the heart of the film.

Credits

Produced and Directed by

Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy
Andy Schocken

Featuring

Baqir Abbas
Rafiq Ahmed
Asad Ali
Najaf Ali
Nijat Ali
Ballu Khan
Saleem Khan
Izzat Majeed
Wynton Marsalis

Executive Producer

Dan Cogan
Geraldyn White Dreyfous
Natalie Massenet
Guy Oseary
Vijay Vaidyanathan
David Waechter

Editor

Flávia de Souza

Director of Photography

Asad Faruqi

Sound Recordist and Associate Producer

Wasif Arshad

Co-Producer

Asad Faruqi

Field Producer

Nadir Siddiqui

Co-Executive Producer

Jenny Raskin

Consulting Editor

Sam Pollard

Jonathan Oppenheim

Additional Editing

Husain Qaizar

Assistant Editor

Arooj Aftab

Zehra Naqvi

Shaheen Nazerli

Additional Camera

Andy Schocken

Liam Dalzell

Justin Schein

Thorsten Thielow

Joshua Z Weinstein

Camera Assistant

Simon John

Additional Sound Recording

Steve Clack

Mark Mandler

Production Assistant

Vance Spicer

Music by

Sachal Studios

Izzat Majeed

Mushtaq Soofi

Sameer Khan

Jay Visvadeva

Nadeem Abbas

Altaf Haider

Khawar Hussain

Tanveer Hussain

Javed Iqbal

Munir Kaukab
Nafees Ahmad Khan
Ali Shaiba

The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis
Walter Blanding
Chris Crenshaw
Dominick Farinacci
Vincent Gardner
Victor Goines
Carlos Henriquez
Sherman Irby
Ali Jackson
Ryan Kisor
Elliot Mason
Ted Nash
Dan Nimmer
Kenny Rampton
Joe Temperley

Additional Music by

Baqir Abbas
Naked Cowboy
Hassan Khan

"Barkha Bahar"

Written by Salil Chaudhury

Courtesy of Courtesy of Silva Screen Music America o/b/o Saregama India Ltd

Arranged by Izzat Majeed, Nijat Ali

"Chanan Chanan"

Written by Sanwal Hassan

Courtesy of The Indus Music Publishing Ltd

Arranged by Izzat Majeed, Nijat Ali

"Henna"

Written by Nafees Ahmed, Izzat Majeed, Riaz Hussain

Courtesy of The Indus Music Publishing Ltd

Arranged by Izzat Majeed, Nijat Ali

"Jeena Yahan Marna Yahan"

Written by Shankar-Jaikishan

Courtesy of Silva Screen Music America o/b/o Saregama India Ltd

"Limbo Jazz"

Written by Duke Ellington

Published by Sony/ATV Harmony
Arranged by Victor Goines

"Mahi Ve"
Written by Khwaja Khurshid Anwar
Courtesy of EMI Pakistan
Arranged by Chris Crenshaw

"Monsoon"
Written by Wazir Afzal
Courtesy of The Indus Music Publishing Ltd
Arranged by Izzat Majeed, Nijat Ali

"My Favorite Things"
Written by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II
Williamson Music (An Imagem Company) (ASCAP)
Arranged by Ted Nash

"New Orleans Blues"
Written by Jelly Roll Morton
Arranged by Victor Goines

"Ranjha Ranjha"
Written by Qadir Shaggan
Courtesy of The Indus Music Publishing Ltd
Arranged by Izzat Majeed, Nijat Ali
Additional arrangement by Ali Jackson

"Rhythmique"
Written by Nijat Ali
Courtesy of The Indus Music Publishing Ltd
Arranged by Carlos Henriquez

"Take Five"
Written by Dave Brubeck, Paul Desmond
Used by arrangement with Desmond Music Co. and Derry Music Co.
Arranged by Riaz Hussain
Additional Arrangement by Walter Blanding

"Take Me Home, Country Roads"
Written by John Denver, William Danoff, Mary Catherine Danoff
Courtesy of WB Music Corp., and Reservoir Media

"Tere Rang Rang"
Written by Abrar Ul Haq
Courtesy of Moviebox Birmingham Ltd

Pakistan Project Manager

Neha Mashooqullah

Pakistan Production Manager

Shahzad Ahmed

Transportation

Muhammad Zahid

Post-Production Consultant

Mary Angelica Molina

Motion Graphics and Title Design

Matt Posorske

Post-Production Services

WorleyWorks

Colorist

Jack Reynolds

Supervising Sound Editor / Re-recording Mixer

Matthew Polis

Sound Editor

Cody Ball

Nicholas Schenck

Audio Post Facility

SoundSpace, NYC

Jazz at Lincoln Center Performance

Live Video Director: James Sapione

Camera Operator: Kyle Craner

Robotic Camera Operator: Hiram Becker

Music Recording Engineer: Rob Macomber

Music Mixing Engineer: Todd Whitelock

Music Editing Engineer: Trevor Fedele

Still Photography

Mobeen Ansari

Translator

Farah Ahmed

Sarah Alvi
Bushra Amin
Hamza Bangash
Uzma Batool
Maria Chawla
Nikita Hakels
Eleyna Haroon
Nabeel Hassan
Hira Humayun
Sharmeen Hussain
Waliya Ilyas
Zahra Jooma
Ibaad Khan
Iman Khan
Priyanka Kumari
Areeb Mahamadi
Mariam Mirza
Mehak Mubin
Abdul Mueed
Kinza Mujib
Sasha Munir
Amynah Reimoo
Anum Sadick
Sarah Saifi
Arman Sayani
Bassam Shazli
Aatir Sohail
Sanam Waheed
Munira Zanzibarwala

Intern

Hassan Ebraheem
Zeeshan Khalid
Jean Moylan

Legal Services

Cowan DeBaets Abrahams & Sheppard LLP
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Simon Pulman

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TV One

Citizens Archive of Pakistan

Dave Brubeck Collection, University of the Pacific Library

Duke Ellington Collection, NMAH, Smithsonian Institution

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Jazz at Lincoln Center

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Riaz Hussain (1950-2012)

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