



I N D I A
ON FILM



British Council and BFI National Archive bring restored rare Indian silent film back to cinemas in India with new live score performed by Anoushka Shankar

***Shiraz: A Romance of India* will tour to four Indian cities, following the restoration world premiere as the BFI London Film Festival Archive Gala with specially-commissioned live film score performed by multi Grammy® - nominated composer and musician Anoushka Shankar**

London, UK, 12 October 2017

The **British Council** and the **British Film Institute (BFI)** have announced that, **following the 61st BFI London Film Festival world premiere** of the restored *Shiraz: A Romance of India*, screening at the Barbican on 14 October the film will **tour four Indian cities** as part of the UK/India 2017 Year of Culture, a year-long celebration of the long-standing relationship between India and the UK, which has seen a vast programme of cultural exchange and activity take place in cities across both countries throughout 2017 which has included an extensive 8 month programme of classic and contemporary Indian Cinema at BFI Southbank.

A world leader in film restoration, the BFI holds the original negative material of *Shiraz* in the Archive. Franz Osten's sumptuous Indian silent classic has been meticulously remastered by the conservation team at the BFI National Archive. Screening at the BFI LFF as the Archive Gala, the film will then visit **Hyderabad, Kolkata, New Delhi and Mumbai** in India from **1 November to 5 November**, accompanied by **live performance** of a specially commissioned score by Grammy® -nominated leading contemporary Indian composer and sitar player, **Anoushka Shankar** and an orchestral ensemble.

By making *Shiraz* accessible to new cinema audiences in India this digital restoration is the latest example of the BFI's ongoing commitment to preserving and sharing world film heritage, having recently digitised over 250 films; India on Film: 1899-1947, Treasures from the BFI National Archive, an unparalleled collection of extremely rare films of India, which have survived from the earliest days of cinema. This significant collection has been made available both via BFI Player and in partnership with the British Council for audiences in India to explore on BFI YouTube and British Council website.

Franz Osten's ground breaking British / Indian/German co-production, produced by British Instructional Films is the second of three remarkable silent films featuring an all-Indian cast and shot on location in India by star and producer Himansu Rai alongside *Light of Asia* (1926) and *A Throw of Dice* (1929). These co-productions were intended by Indian cinema pioneer Rai and Osten to be the vanguard of a west/ east partnership to bring quality films to India. *Shiraz* was adapted from Niranjana Pal's play, the first Indian playwright to have his work performed in the West End.

Shiraz tells the love story of the 17th century princess who inspired the construction of the Taj Mahal. For the modern viewer the appeal of *Shiraz* is the extreme rarity of a

sophisticated silent feature film made outside the major producing nations of the West, the gorgeous settings and costumes and the glories of the spectacular fort at Agra and of course the iconic Taj Mahal, a central character here in its own right. Two infamous kisses that take place in the film will definitely surprise modern audiences and are really quite extraordinary for Indian Cinema of the period.

Deeply rooted in the Indian Classical music tradition, Anoushka Shankar studied exclusively from the age of nine under her father and guru, the late Ravi Shankar, and made her professional debut as a classical sitarist at the age of thirteen. By the age of 20, she had made three classical recordings and received her first Grammy® nomination, thereby becoming the first Indian female and youngest-ever nominee in the World Music category.

Through her bold and collaborative approach as a composer, Anoushka has encouraged cross-cultural dialogue whilst demonstrating the versatility of the sitar across musical genres. As a result, Anoushka has created a vital body of work with a prominent roster of artists such as Sting, M.I.A, Herbie Hancock, Pepe Habichuela, Karsh Kale, Rodrigo y Gabriela, and Joshua Bell.

Tickets for the live score screenings of *Shiraz* in India, can be bought by the public online in India on BookMyShow and via a process of pre-registration, expected to reach more than 4000 people. The tour will be made possible with the kind support of Qadir Ali Baig Theatre Foundation in Hyderabad as part of the Qadir Ali Baig Theatre Festival 2017 and Sangit Kala Mandir in Kolkata.

Following the Indian tour *Shiraz* will screen around the UK in January 2018 and be released on Blu-ray by BFI.

On bringing *Shiraz* back to audiences in India, **Robin Baker, BFI Head Curator** says, *“These gala performances of Shiraz are the culmination of the thousands of hours it has taken the BFI National Archive to restore and transform a silent film classic, ensuring that it is safely preserved for future generations. Very few Indian silent films survive, which makes Shiraz all the more important and precious. It seems particularly fitting that in this UK-India Year of Culture 2017 we celebrate with a film that brought together talent from India and the UK 90 years ago - while the new score brings the film right up to date thanks to the genius of Anoushka Shankar”*

Alan Gemmell OBE, Director, British Council India said, *“For over 100 years film has connected the UK and India. With the British Film Institute and Anoushka Shankar we are bringing one of the most famous on-screen kisses and iconic Indian films back to life. Shiraz is a highlight of the British Council’s programme for Prime Minister Modi’s UK-India Year of Culture. A programme that will celebrate the UK and India’s relationship, connect with young people in both countries and inspire them to build a relationship for the next 70 years.”*

Briony Hanson, British Council Director Film adds, *“For audiences anywhere, the chance to see Shiraz in a form as close to how it was originally made is exciting; to enjoy a new score by Anoushka Shankar who is doing so much to introduce a new generation to sitar music, makes it doubly so; but to have the opportunity to present both film and composer to new audiences across India for the first time is unbeatable, and makes a perfect highlight for our UK/India 2017 Year of Culture”*

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Venues and dates

1 November Hyderabad International Convention Centre, Hyderabad
3 November Kala Mandir, Kolkata
4 November Siri Fort Auditorium, New Delhi
5 November Sri Shanmukhananda Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi Auditorium , Mumbai

The tour will be made possible with the support of partners in each city

Hyderabad : Qadir Ali Baig Foundation
Kolkata : Sangit Kala Mandir
New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

Ticketing information

- Tickets in Mumbai, Delhi and Hyderabad will be available to buy through Book My Show and are on sale now .
- Tickets for the screening in Kolkata will be given away to people who pre-register via the British Council India website.

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ABOUT UK/INDIA2017 YEAR OF CULTURE

UK/India2017 is a year-long celebration of the long-standing relationship between India and the UK, which will see a vast programme of cultural exchange and activity take place in cities across both countries. Working with a huge number of partners and institutions, the British Council is developing a programme of cultural activity which will connect and inspire people in both countries; and strengthen and celebrate the UK and India's cultural ties. For more information on UK/India 2017 please visit www.britishcouncil.in

ABOUT THE BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We work with over 100 countries in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Last year we reached over 65 million people directly and 731 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications. We make a positive contribution to the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. Founded in 1934 we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. We receive 15 per cent core funding grant from the UK government. britishcouncil.org

ABOUT THE BFI

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK - investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

ABOUT THE BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE

The BFI National Archive was founded in 1935 and has grown to become the one of the largest and most important collections of film and television in the world with over 180,000 films and 750,000 television programmes. For over 80 years the BFI has been an international leader in film preservation and guardian of Britain's unparalleled film and TV heritage. The BFI is an innovator in presenting films to audiences in new and dynamic ways, from cinemas to film festivals, outdoor events to online video-on-demand. At the heart of all its activities is the BFI's central aim to ensure that everyone in the UK has access to the widest possible range of film and their own film heritage.

That heritage includes all time great British directors Alfred Hitchcock, David Lean and Powell and Pressburger; and the rich vein of documentary filmmaking, in which Britain led the world, including the lyrical work of Humphrey Jennings. The archive also boasts a significant collection of filmmakers' papers as well as extensive stills, posters and production and costume designs along with original scripts, press books and related ephemera.

Expert teams undertake the time-consuming and complex task of restoring films at the BFI John Paul Getty Jr Conservation Centre in Hertfordshire. The BFI's most precious film materials are kept in optimum conditions in the world-leading Master Film Store in Warwickshire.