



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**26TH SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL PAYS TRIBUTE
TO IRANIAN FILMMAKER MOHSEN MAKHMALBAF**



Mohsen Makhmalbaf

Singapore, 1 October 2015 – The 26th edition of the Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF) is set to pay tribute to acclaimed Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf this December. In recognition of his lifelong dedication and contribution to cinema, the Festival will confer him with an Honorary Award, and include a retrospective of his works as part of its line-up.



A legacy of Iranian cinema, Makhmalbaf has gained worldwide recognition for his powerful use of film as both a cultural statement and an educative art form. The self-taught director has released more than 20 critically-acclaimed feature films since 1983, exploring themes and pushing boundaries surrounding Iran's social and political environment and its people through his works. Most recently at the 2015 Venice Film Festival, he was awarded the prestigious Robert Bresson Award, dedicated to 'a director who has given testimony of the difficult path towards the search for the spiritual meaning of life'.

SGIFF Executive Director, Yuni Hadi, said, "Makhmalbaf's films have been a regular feature in the history of SGIFF, with *Gabbeh* opening the festival in 1997, and *Kandahar* in 2002. His unyielding efforts in conveying the untold stories of a region through film, in honest and profound ways, are unmatched. We celebrate and pay tribute to his perseverance, fervour and conviction as both artist and advocate, and strongly believe that he will inspire future generations of filmmakers to continue telling our Asian story."

The Honorary Award will be presented at the SGIFF Silver Screen Awards to be held at Marina Bay Sands on 5 December 2015. As part of SGIFF's *Tribute* segment, the audience will be presented with a special showcase of Makhmalbaf's work during the Festival. This includes a screening of his latest feature, *The President* (2014), which opened several film festivals around the world last year. The dark satire follows the life of a dictator and his six-year-old grandson as they flee from revolutionaries, while coming face-to-face with the people he once oppressed. Other award-winning films in the line-up include *The Cyclist* (1987), *Salam Cinema* (1994), *Gabbeh* (1995), and *A Moment of Innocence* (1995).

The Festival will also be organising a series of masterclasses and talks to encourage conversations and perspectives on film. On 5 December, Makhmalbaf will be holding a masterclass to share about his personal experiences in filmmaking and his constant



attempts to reinvent its form. A screening of documentary *Daddy's School* by Hassan Solhjo, about Makhmalbaf and his family's film school, will precede the dialogue session.

Running from 26 November to 6 December 2015, the 26th edition of SGIFF will take place across various venues, including Marina Bay Sands, which returns this year as Presenting Sponsor. The other screening venues are National Museum of Singapore, Shaw Theatres Lido, National Gallery Singapore, The Arts House, The Projector and The Substation. Film line-up for this year's edition will be curated from the over 1,400 submissions received. Ticket sales for SGIFF will begin end October 2015.

The SGIFF is an event of the Singapore Media Festival, hosted by Media Development Authority (Singapore). SGIFF's Official Sponsors include Presenting Sponsor, Marina Bay Sands and Official Festival Time Partner, IWC Schaffhausen.

-end-



About the Singapore International Film Festival

The Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF) is the largest and longest-running film event in Singapore. Founded in 1987, the festival has become an iconic event in the Singapore arts calendar that is widely attended by international film critics, and recognised worldwide for its focus on Asian filmmakers and the promotion of Southeast Asian films. The SGIFF is committed to nurturing and championing local and regional talents in the art of filmmaking. The festival serves as a catalyst in igniting public interest in the arts, and encouraging artistic dialogue and cultural exchanges. The SGIFF is organised by the Singapore International Film Festival Ltd, a non-profit organisation and holds the Institution of a Public Character (IPC) status.

For more information, please visit www.sgiff.com.

facebook.com/sginternationalfilmfestival | instagram.com/sgiffest/ | [@SGIFFest](https://twitter.com/SGIFFest) | #SGIFF2015

For media queries, please contact:

Sarah-Marie Teo

Tate Anzur

DID: 6221 2681

Email: sarah-marie.teo@tateanzur.com

Cherell Soon

Tate Anzur

DID: 6221 3808

Email: cherell.soon@tateanzur.com



ANNEX

ABOUT MOHSEN MAKHMALBAF

Mohsen Makhmalbaf is a singular figure in the legacy of Iranian cinema. His self-taught filmmaking practice is an astonishing exemplar of the power and urgency of cinema in its use as cultural weapon wielded for the ceaseless fight against oppression, and an educative art form that reflects the conditions of life and society. Since 1983, he has released more than 20 feature films that have been critically received internationally.

Born in 1957 in Tehran, Makhmalbaf grew up in a working-class family. As a young activist who attempted to overthrow the Shah regime in Iran, Makhmalbaf was shot by the police and jailed for five years. Upon his release, an epiphany that oppression, as well as the potential for liberation, has its roots in culture spurred him on to seek out a non-violent form of activism through art. Makhmalbaf turned to cinema.

Together with his contemporaries such as Majid Majidi, Abbas Kiarostami and Jafar Panahi, a second wave of Iranian cinema emerged from intellectual and political post-revolution climate. Makhmalbaf came into international prominence with his 5th feature film *The Peddler* (1987). His films of this period, which include *The Cyclist* (1987) and *Marriage of the Blessed* (1990) focused on reflecting the realities of minor figures in Iranian society. His films *A Time of Love* and *The Nights of the Zayandeh-Rood*, both released in 1991, were banned in Iran due to their thematic issues. In 1997, he founded the Makhmalbaf Film House, a film school and production house with a pedagogy that extends beyond the disciplinary confines of cinema. There he trained a small pool of students and family members who are now close collaborators and filmmakers in their own right.

Makhmalbaf's passion towards the arts is limitless. As an advocator for the right to expression, he ceaselessly perseveres in his craft despite countless setbacks and threats, always on the move and constantly evolving in style, but always coming back full circle to his essential conviction towards an illumination of the universality of humanity. He left Iran for Paris in 2005 and now resides in London.



The Cyclist

Iran / 1987 / 83min / Persian



Unable to find the money needed to continue his wife's critical treatment at the hospital, Nasim, a one-time bicycle marathon winner, agrees to the suggestion of a circus promoter to put on a performance of a lifetime - riding a bicycle continuously in circles for seven days in a city square.

With the price of admission, spectators revel in this spectacle. A growing crowd – consisting of curious spectators, gamblers, street vendors, politicians and the sick and dying – gather for entertainment, the spectacle of hope and perseverance, and to exploit the event for their own monetary gain.

Part theatre of cruelty and part inspirational performance of boundless limits, this spectacle of an eternal act of circling becomes a catalyst that attracts resounding human actions in all tenderness and brutality, and reflects upon existence and its narrative of struggle and resilience.



Salaam Cinema

Iran / 1995 / 81min / Persian



In this direct exercise in meta-fiction that confuses documentary and fiction, Mohsen Makhmalbaf advertises a casting call for his new film about the centenary of cinema. He prepared 1,000 application forms but 5,000 people turned up, resulting in a riot. What follows is a series of casting interviews with a few dozen willing actors, which Makhmalbaf decides will be the film itself.

With the systematic nature of the administration of the casting call, and the dominant and oppressive guise that Makhmalbaf takes on, the interviews play out much like an interrogation, a vigorous analysis of Iranian society and its desires through the voices of its people. As the power-relations between director and actors spin like a pendulum through their pointed conversations, and the act of truth and lying becomes more uncertain, a certain authenticity and intensity of cinema emerges evidently before our eyes.



Gabbeh

Iran, France / 1996 / 75min / Persian



Setting out to document a nomadic tribe living in the remote steppes of South-Eastern Iran, Makhmalbaf saw a similarity between Cinema and the Gabbeh, a traditional and intricately designed Persian carpet weaved in the village. While different in its modern and traditional form, both practices strive for a poetic expression and a naturalistic sense of tranquillity. What results is a weaving of fiction and ethnography, and fantasy and reality, in what is perhaps one of Makhmalbaf's most colourful and lushly lensed films.

When an old couple washes their Gabbeh on the banks of a stream, a young woman emerges from the carpet to tell a tale of her love for a mysterious horseman who follows her and the movements of her clan, always from a distance. Intersecting with this story are lyrical expressions of nomadic culture as it's shaped by the rhythms of nature and the ebbs and flows of life – a sensuous cinematic tapestry that documents the stories of a culture that is close to extinction.



A Moment of Innocence

Iran, France / 1996 / 78min / Persian



During the Shah's regime, a 17-year-old Makhmalbaf, together with a girl, attacked a policeman to disarm him. They ended up wounding each other, the girl disappears, and Makhmalbaf receives a five-year jail sentence. Two decades later, when Makhmalbaf is an established director, the policeman turns up at his house looking for a role. Makhmalbaf decides to make a film about the incident.

While this could lead to a simple act of reconciliation, *A Moment of Innocence* take a different course – an autobiographical account by two, a revisiting of their younger selves and a test of their past actions. Fact and fiction, past and present, all conflate in the reconstruction of the event, leading to a climax that brings them back to a crossroad.



The President

Georgia, UK, France, Germany / 2014 / 118min / Georgian



A coup d'etat overthrows The President's rule, and he is forced to escape with his grandson. They journey through the country in disguise, heading towards the sea where a ship awaits to bring them to safety. Now part of the masses that he has oppressed, The President plunges into the reality of his rule, experiencing the very perilous conditions of his regime. Makhmalbaf pits naivety, through the eyes of the grandson, against the brutal atmosphere of impending violence, resulting in this very moving and lyrical oeuvre about humanity that does not take sides.

Playing out simply and clearly as a parable, Makhmalbaf's latest feature functions as a thesis on the cyclic nature of oppression, injecting empathy towards the 'tyrant' to explore the effects and perpetuation of tyranny within the subjugated.



Masterclass with Mohsen Makhmalbaf

Date: Saturday, 5 December 2015

Time: 11am to 12.30pm

Venue: Filmgarde Bugis+

Free admission by registration (Details to be announced)

No stranger to the world of arthouse cinema and the festival circuit, Mohsen Makhmalbaf has achieved many things during his lifetime. From a tumultuous start into adulthood after an act of rebellion, to starting his own film school dedicated to the theory and practice of cinema, Mohsen Makhmalbaf is not only considered influential by many, but also inspiring. This intimate dialogue session lets you in on the auteur's life and cinema, how he learnt the language and is constantly attempting to reinvent the form, and how life and cinema always go hand in hand. This dialogue session will be preceded by the screening of the documentary, *Daddy's School*.

Daddy's School

Directed by Hassan Sohljoo

Iran / 2014 / 59min

Daddy's School is a story of a most unique family in the world – a family that happens to be a part of a film school, led by a man who once wanted to be Iran's Che Guevara.

Dissatisfied with what the Islamic Revolution brought to the Iranian people, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, a self-taught filmmaker, decided to express his views through his films. He soon became one of Iran's pioneering auteurs after the revolution, drawing great reception with critics and audiences around the world, while still under pressure from the officials back home. It was during that moment that Mohsen's daughter seemed to mirror the unhappiness of life within a regime, with the decision to leave Islamic school to study cinema under his tutelage. This film details the challenges of the father of three, who had to learn to teach his children how to tell their own stories their own way, and through independent thought, just as he had done before.