



**MUSIC
BOX
FILMS**

presents

Fifi Howls From Happiness

a film by Mitra Farahani

2013, Iran, 96 min. Unrated.

In Farsi with English subtitles

For press materials: <http://www.musicboxfilms.com/fifi-press>

Official site: <http://www.musicboxfilms.com/fifi>

NY & LA Publicity:

Sasha Berman
Shotwell Media
310.450.5571

SashaBerman@mac.com

Music Box Films Marketing/Publicity:

Brian Andreotti/Rebecca Gordon
312-508-5361/312-508-5362
bandreotti@musicboxfilms.com
rgordon@musicboxfilm.com

Distribution Contact:

Andrew Carlin
312-508-5360
acarlin@musicboxfilms.com

SYNOPSIS

Mitra Farahani's lyrical documentary explores the enigma of provocative artist Bahman Mohassess, the so-called "Persian Picasso," whose acclaimed paintings and sculptures dominated pre-revolutionary Iran. Irreverent and uncompromising, a gay man in a hostile world, Mohassess had a conflicted relationship with his homeland—revered by elites in the art scene and praised as a national icon, only to be censored later by an oppressive regime. Known for his iconoclastic art as well as his scathing declarations, Mohassess abandoned the country over 30 years ago for a simple, secluded life in Italy.

While the new Iranian government destroyed many of his works, Mohassess himself obliterated even more-- in rage at man's inhumanity to man, environmental destruction, and the futility of idealism. Ranging from tender to playful to haunting to grotesque, these unforgettable pieces were as mercurial as the man himself, a chain-smoking recluse with the mouth of a sailor and the soul of a poet, touched by a mischievous spark and as likely to lapse into a political rant as a burst of eccentric laughter.

Determined to interview Mohassess, fine artist/filmmaker Farahani discovers him living alone in a hotel room in Rome and begins to craft the perfect final biography, in his own words and on his terms. Along the way, the inimitable spirit of the man behind the image is laid bare—both painfully sensitive and crudely comical, "condemned to paint," but unable to compel himself to leave anything behind as a legacy. When a pair of artist brothers and ardent fans of Mohassess commission him for an ambitious project, the elderly man is inspired with a renewed sense of purpose and returns to painting after decades of dormancy. A lasting tribute to an elusive artistic genius, *FIFI HOWLS FROM HAPPINESS* affirms the power of creative freedom, the right of the artist to create and to destroy, and above all, to have no regrets.

BIOGRAPHY OF BAHMAN MOHASSESS

BAHMAN MOHASSESS, a surviving member of the Mongolian dynasty on his father's side and the Ghajar dynasty on his mother's side, was born on March 1, 1931 in Rasht on the coast of the Caspian Sea. He left Iran after the coup against Mossadegh, settled in Rome in 1954 and attended the Art Academy of Rome, where he was trained as a painter and sculptor. He was also commissioned to do important works for Tehran public squares by the Shah and the Empress Farah Diba, most of which were later taken down during the Islamic Revolution in 1979. For many years, Mohassess lived and worked alternately in Italy and Iran. In 2006, he left Tehran for good, after destroying almost all of the work that remained in his studio there. Mohassess passed away in Rome in 2010.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Painter and filmmaker MITRA FARAHANI was born in Tehran, Iran in 1975. She studied with the renowned painter Gholem Hossein Nami. After receiving an art degree at the Azad University in Tehran, she moved to Paris and took up residence in the Cité Internationale des Arts.

In 2001, she enrolled in the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, where she made her first documentary, *Just A Woman*. The film was chosen for the Berlin Film Festival and awarded the Teddy Award Special Jury Prize. Her documentary *Zohre and Manouchehr (Taboos)*, an investigation of sexuality in Iranian society, was presented at the Berlin Film Festival of 2004. In 2005, she made the documentary *Behjat Sadr : Suspended Time*, a portrait of the pioneer of abstract painting in Iran. With *Fifi Howls From Happiness*, a portrait of Bahman Mohassess, she pursues her profound exploration of Iranian modern art's cardinal protagonists.

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

Just a Woman, 2001

Zohre and Manouchehr (Taboos), 2004

Behjat Sadr : Suspended Time, 2007

Fifi Howls From Happiness, 2012

TECHNICAL CREDITS

Director : Mitra Farahani

Executive Producer : Fereydoun Firouz

Producer : Marjaneh Moghimi

Editor : Yannick Kergoat, Suzana Pedro

Sound Edit and Mix : Amir Hossein GHassemi

Original Music Score : Tara Kamangar

Camera: Mitra Farahani

CAST

Bahman Mohassess

Rokni & Ramin Haerizadeh

Farshad Mahootforoush

ABOUT MUSIC BOX FILMS

Music Box Films is a leading distributor of international, American independent, and documentary content in North America.

Past releases include Guillaume Canet's hit thriller TELL NO ONE and the film adaptations of Stieg Larsson's trilogy of international mega-selling novels. The first in the series, THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO with over \$10 million in US box office, was one of the most popular foreign-language releases of recent years.

Recent titles include Roger Michell's LE WEEK-END, written by Hanif Kureishi and starring Jim Broadbent; five-time Academy Award® nominee Jan Troell's THE LAST SENTENCE; and Pawel Pawlikowski's IDA, winner of the FIPRESCI Prize at the Toronto International Film Festival.

Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates The Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premiere venue for independent and foreign films.