

Document Citation

Title	The music room
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Publisher name not available</i>
Date	
Type	distributor materials
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	2
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Jalsaghar (The music room), Ray, Satyajit, 1959

Produced, directed and adapted by Satyajit Ray; based on a novel by Tarashankar Banerjee; photography by Subrata Mitra. Original title: "Jalsaghar." With Chabi Bhowmik, Padma Devi, Pinaki Sen Gupta. Hindi dialog with English subtitles.

Again Satyajit Ray examines a vanishing way of life, this time in the personage of a samindar (landowner), passionately addicted to sumptuous festivals and musical soirees. However, the same addiction on the part of his ancestors has left him with a palace but very little wealth. When the time comes to hold the "Sacred Thread" ceremony for his adolescent son, he is without funds, but sponsors a splendorous affair at the expense of his wife's jewels. Later, when his wife and son are killed in a storm, he shuts his music room and retires into a hermit-like existence.

Four years of self-imposed solitude pass and then, on hearing of an elaborate musical festival by a neighbor, his overwhelming passion returns. He re-opens the music room, and scraping together his last remaining funds, schedules a soiree featuring a famous dancer. His pride is restored, but the deed tragically results in his death.

"The Music Room (made early, for respite, between the second and third parts of the Apu trilogy), has such grandeur in its best scenes that we must revise customary dramatic standards. By our usual standards it isn't a good movie. It's often crude and it's poorly constructed; but I think it's probably a great movie. It's a study of noblesse oblige carried to extremity, to a kind of aesthetic madness. It recalls The Magnificent Ambersons and The Cherry Orchard but, more painfully, it calls up hideous memories of our own expansive gestures, our own big-role playing. We are forced to see the recklessness and egomania of our greatest moments--and at the same time we are forced to see the sordid banality of being practical. The hero is great because he destroys himself; he is also mad. I was exasperated by the defects of The Music Room when I saw it; now I realize that I will never forget it. Like King Lear, it can't be shaken off." --- Pauline Kael

"Above all, Director Ray is a teller of tales, a Bengali Balzac who envisions personal tragedy as a part of the human comedy, who

THE MUSIC ROOM

can see the universal in the unique. He has created in the samindar a character both peculiarly Indian and profoundly human, a man who would not face the truth and therefore had to face the consequences...As actor Chabi Biswas portrays him, the samindar is a seething complex of contradictions: arrogant yet sensitive, pig-headed as well as lion-hearted. He is a fool but there is something magnificent in his folly, and even at his most fatuous there sits upon him the ennobling dignity of doom." --- Time