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Edward Harrison

presents

Satyajit Ray's

"The Music Room"
(Jalsaghar)

Cast

Biswambhar Roy, the zamindar.....	Chabi Boswas
His Wife.....	Padma Devi
His Son.....	Pinaki Sen Gupta
Manager of Roy's estate.....	Tulsi Lahiri
Roy's servant.....	Kali Sarkar
Ganguly.....	Gangapado Bose
1st Singer.....	Akhtari Bai
2nd Singer.....	Salamat Khan
Kathak Dancer.....	Roshan Kumari

Credits

Photography.....	Subrata Mitra
Editor.....	Dulal Dutt
Art Direction.....	Bansi Chandra Gupta
Sets.....	R. R. Sinde
Sound.....	Durgadas Mitra
Musical Director.....	Ustad Vilayet Khan
Based on a novel by.....	Tarashankar Banerjee
Adapted, Produced and Directed by..Satyajit Ray	

Running Time - 95 minutes

THE MUSIC ROOM
(Jalsaghar)

Synopsis

Set in the 1920's, Jalsaghar tells the story of a vanishing way of life and contrasts, as do all of Ray's films, the old and the new.

Biswambhar Roy, an elderly Indian aristocrat, is the scion of a long line of wealthy landowners (zamindars). There is, however, little wealth left in the palace where he lives with his wife and son. Most of the family fortune has been spent on sumptuous festivals and musical soirees - a pastime to which Biswambhar is passionately addicted.

The zamindar's remoteness from reality is shown in the opening shots where Chabi Biswas, sitting on the roof of his palace, inquires of his servant, "What month is it?" The film reveals early the zamindar's strong disdain of a nouveau riche neighbor, Ganguli, who is building a splendid new house in the neighborhood and introducing a jarring modernity.

When the time comes to hold the "Sacred Thread" ceremony for his adolescent son (a Brahmin ceremony marking the boy's fitness to participate in the religious life of his fathers) Biswambhar's bank credits are exhausted. Nevertheless the ceremony, featuring a jalsa, or musical soiree, is held with the greatest splendour - at the expense of his wife's jewels. When Ganguli invites Biswambhar to his house-warming, he curtly refuses and arranges a festivity of his own. Since his wife and son are away at the time, Biswambhar sends them a message, asking them to return immediately.

While the musical part of the celebration is in progress, a thunderstorm blows up. Knowing that his wife and son must now be travelling home by boat, Biswambhar nervously leaves the music room and starts pacing about outside his palace. There an old servant breaks the news to him that his wife and son were drowned when their boat capsized in the storm.

This tragedy shatters Biswambhar. After shutting up his music room, he retires into the palace to live a hermit-like existence, ignoring all that is happening in the outside world. The palace is all that is left to him now; all the rest of the estate has gone to pay for the debts he had incurred in previous years.

Four years pass, when one day a piece of news, handed on by one of his two remaining servants, arouses Biswambhar from his apathy: the wealthy Ganguli has now built a music room of his own, and has engaged a famous dancer, Krishnabai, for the opening ceremony. This is too much for Biswambhar, and suddenly his old, overwhelming passion for music returns to him. He orders the servants to re-open his music room, and scrapes together his last remaining rupees to pay for having Krishnabai dance there.

On the night of the recital, the guests - including Ganguli - assemble in the music room as in the old days. The proceedings are as sumptuous as ever, and Krishnabai gives a performance of memorable skill and artistry. As her dance comes to an end, Ganguli pulls out some gold coins to throw to the performers. But he is stopped by Biswambhar: it is the privilege of the master of the house to reward the artists. Proudly, Biswambhar hands Krishnabai the last remains of his worldly wealth...

This final victory over his old enemy proves too much, however, for Biswambhar's mental balance. As dawn begins to break, Biswambhar orders his dead son's favorite horse to be saddled, and gallops away towards the river. From the palace steps his two terrified servants watch him being thrown, and they arrive only just in time for him to die in their arms.