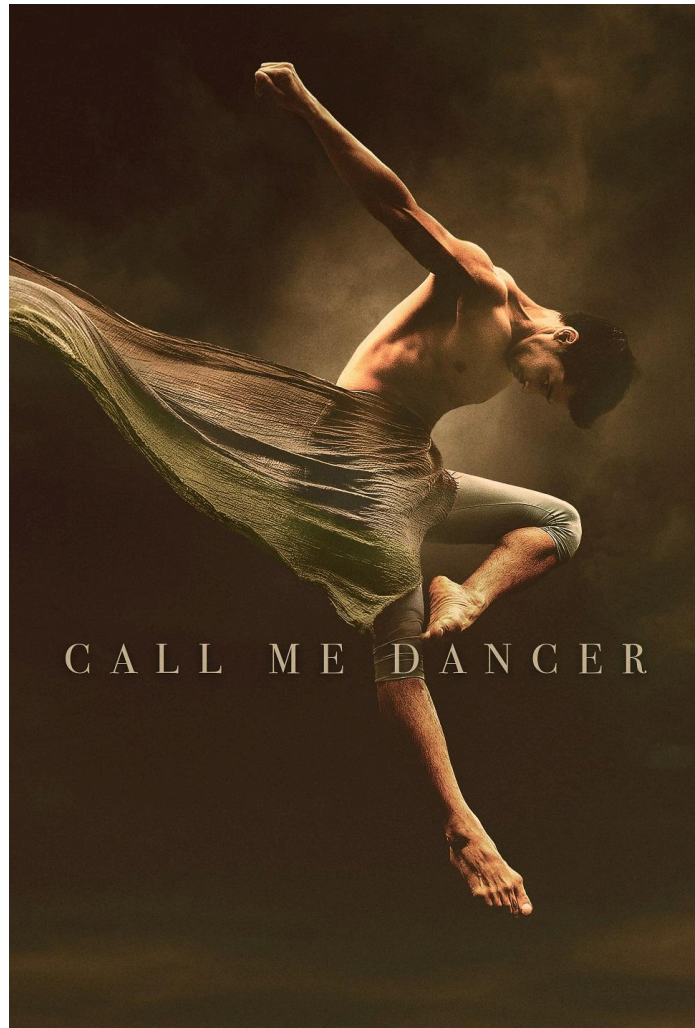


CALL ME DANCER

a documentary film by Leslie Shampaine



2023 | filmed in India, UK, Israel, USA | in English & Hindi | 84 minutes
In Co-Production with ZDF and ARTE

Official website:

www.callmedancer.com

LOGLINE

Torn between his artistic dreams and his parents' expectations, a Mumbai hip-hop dancer makes a precarious choice after a chance encounter with a curmudgeonly ballet master.

SYNOPSIS

Manish is an athletic street dancer from Mumbai, whose working-class parents depend on their only son's support. When he accidentally walks into an inner-city dance school and encounters a curmudgeonly 70-year-old Israeli ballet master, a hunger develops within him. Ambitious and passionate, Manish is determined to make it as a professional dancer, but the odds are stacked against him.

Call Me Dancer will take you on a magical journey...from the streets of Mumbai to the stages of New York. A story of perseverance, rebellion, passion, family, culture, and an unlikely friendship – filmed in India, Israel, the U.K., and the U.S - and featuring music from legendary singer/songwriter Jay Sean and hip-hop artist/rapper Anik Khan, with a sublime score by Nainita Desai and Nina Humphreys

Call Me Dancer will make you want to jump up from your seat and, yes, dance!

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**Billy Elliott meets Rocky - but for real...**

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FESTIVAL AWARDS

Nominated, Best Documentary, Magnolia Awards, Shanghai, July, 2024

Best of Fest, Documentary - Palm Springs Intl Film Festival, 2024

Audience Award, Sonoma International Film Festival, 2024

Audience Award, Annapolis International Film Festival, 2024

Next Wave Jury Prize, Miami Jewish Film Festival, 2024

Audience Award, Documentary – Berkshire International Film Festival 2023

Art of Storytelling Award – Doc Edge Film Festival, New Zealand 2023

Audience Award, Feature - Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival 2023

Best Director Award - Indian Film Festival of Cincinnati 2023

Audience Award, Portraits Program - Vancouver International Film Festival 2023

Art and Inspiration Award - Hamptons Doc Fest 2023

Audience Award, Best Documentary Feature - Tasveer South Asian Film Festival, Seattle 2023

Audience Award, Documentary, Rehoboth Beach Independent Film Festival 2023

Audience Favorite Award, San Francisco Dance Film Festival 2023
Audience Award, Documentary - River to River Film Festival, Florence, Italy 2023
Excellence in Documentary Directing Award - New York Women in Film & Television
@ New York Indian Film Festival 2023
Young Jury Award, DOKUart Festival, Bjelovar, Croatia 2023
Honorable Mention, Best Documentary, International South Asian Film Festival
Canada, Surrey, Canada 2023

QUOTES

Astonishing...it's the classic underdog story...touching...lustrous imagery
Matthew Carey, Deadline

...Dramatic...Feel-good film...
Elizabeth Zimmer, Village Voice

Heartfelt, captivating and inspirational
The NYC Movie Guru

Cinematic... It's the Rocky Balboa story
Jay Sean – British Pop Legend

Los Angeles Times includes CALL ME DANCER on their “*holiday list of 11 things to keep the cheer going!*”

Compelling tale of perseverance, passion and friendship
Celia Ipiotis, Eye on the Arts

Dance is an art form, and this movie is simply pure art!
Yoni Avital, Intl Director, Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company

SELECTED PRESS (see our [website](#) for more reviews)

DEADLINE

Documentary Soars On Incredible Talent, And Charm, Of Manish Chauhan.
Touching... Lustrous imagery.....the classic underdog story.

Call Me Dancer reaches the heart through the archetypal quest of the film's hero, and the charm of Manish Chauhan.

Acts of stunning strength and agility with the joy of someone born to dance. He's also beautiful...

VILLAGE VOICE

Capturing Dance – and Dancers' Lives – on Film.

Merging cinematography and choreography requires a fine balance.

Call Me Dancer represents the strongest slice of the films on offer.

When you watch this feel-good film, stay through the delightful credits.

THE NEW YORK SUN

"[Director Leslie] Shampaine has brought us a buoyant film bolstered by important things to say about arts and its potential for providing commonality and purpose. At this perilous historical moment, 'Call Me Dancer' comes as a gift."

NYC MOVIE GURU

"A truly great documentary finds just the right balance between entertaining the audience, provoking them emotionally as well as intellectually. It also makes you forget that you're watching a documentary because you're so immersed in the subject's life and in his or her story. 'Call Me Dancer' accomplishes those two major feats with flying colors."

FORWARD

"...a touching underdog story of resilience and perseverance that pays off, trumping all barriers."

EYE ON DANCE / EYE ON THE ARTS NY

Colors saturate the screen....A compelling tale of perseverance, passion and friendship.

THE JEWISH VOICE AND OPINION

"Director Leslie Shampaine, a former dancer herself, brings a unique perspective, showing the grit, pain, and exhilaration of dance. Call Me Dancer shows how despite coming from different backgrounds dance can be a natural equalizer, challenging each participant to be fully present and focused on becoming their best."

ONE FILM FAN

Delivering an incontrovertibly inspired, magical, wholly grounded, compellingly evocative portrait of the travails and triumphs of the human spirit while beautifully illustrating the sheer, influentially emotional potency its foundational art form and story will elicit in you as a viewer...

...moves with excellent pacing and total purpose to live a dream...

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### **PHOTOS**

**Additional high-res images can be downloaded here: [click here to download](#)**

## **POSTER**

[Link](#) to posters. **Vertical and Horizontal. With and w/o billing block (aka credits).**

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1la5PCoh-uJdtwY-YvGPSdkDe9oPbfw7p?usp=sharing>

[Link](#) to **Slide for a Q&A**

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/18oXTaCb7zvaaliugUfmgqCvqMduPpvxV/view?usp=sharing>

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

**Instagram Call Me Dancer:** <https://www.instagram.com/callmedancermovie>

**Instagram Manish Chauhan:** <https://www.instagram.com/manishchauhan02>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/callmedancermovie>

**Tik-tok:** <https://www.tiktok.com/@callmedacnervovie>

YouTube:

#callmedancermovie

#callmedancer

#manishchauhan

#manishchauhan02

#jaysean

#eastvillageentertainment

#firsthandfilms\_official

#leslieshampaine

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

This is a story that found me. I have been working in documentary film as a producer since I retired from my professional career in dance - but I had never directed a film. When Yehuda Ma'or contacted me, I couldn't resist the chance to do this.

During my life as a ballet dancer, my path crossed his many times: I saw Yehuda perform in Israel as a principal dancer with the Bat-Dor Dance Company, and I took his master classes in San Francisco and New York.

Yehuda was a respected and dynamic ballet instructor who taught some of the greatest dancers of our time, Rudolf Nureyev, Natalia Makarova and many others. At the age of 70 his career was in decline and he had become a solitary man whose gruff manner and demands for athletic and artistic excellence intimidated younger students. Then his life changed when he was offered a job at the Danceworx Academy in Mumbai. The founder of the dance school, Ashley Lobo, describes the special teacher/student relationship one finds in India, "In India we have a very rich tradition of Guru-shishya

parampara..which is you respect the guru. Yehuda received the love and respect of the students which he would never get anywhere overseas.” He started working with dancers who were eager for his knowledge.

Yehuda approached me to make this documentary, because he knows that as a dancer and filmmaker, I could offer an insider’s sensitivity and perspective. Dance films are typically created by people looking into our world from the outside. They convey the difficulty of the profession but what is often lost is the passion and inner joy that pushes dancers past the pain. It became clear to me that in the larger worlds of dance and film there was nobody who could bring this story to life the way I could.

Dancers are intensely focused, insular athletes who feel most comfortable among themselves and in a dance studio. Yehuda gave me complete access to his students and their worlds and allowed me to shine a light, and my camera, into their inner life.

Ballet has historically been dominated by those with means. Access to the top levels of ballet are not just limited to those with talent but those who can afford to sacrifice aspects of normal life to pursue their dreams of becoming professional dancers. Even my own journey was financially supported by my grandparents, a path my parents couldn’t afford raising three kids. Today, this has only marginally changed. These obstacles are even more pronounced for many of Yehuda’s students who come from backgrounds where dance has never existed beyond the scope of cultural expression and celebration. Let alone as a profession. But once one is bitten by the passion to dance, nothing else matters. The central character Manish Chauhan, stood out for his talent, his discipline and commitment regardless of the challenges.

At first glance this story is a cross between Billy Elliot and The Karate Kid. But whereas these films focus on the change in the pupil, this film is also the story of the teacher’s transformation: Yehuda is an isolated curmudgeon at the end of a storied career who finds his life redeemed in India by students who offer respect and love for him as a teacher and have become his family.

Because of the short life-span of a dancer, time and injury are one’s biggest enemies. During our filming, Manish was badly injured and it was unclear if he would recover and dance again. Then COVID hit and it, too, devastated the careers of upcoming dancers. As an athlete one cannot stop training for one or two years. It was Manish’s passion and doggedness that kept him going, refusing to give up. In a grueling, underpaid profession these intense, dedicated artists would choose no other path.

I gathered a talented international team made up of brilliant Indian professionals with insights into the culture and socio-economic reality of Mumbai that I myself could not have.



Arts can change lives. Art can act as an instrument for eradicating boundaries, whether socio-economic, religious or national. Artists speak a language that anyone can understand - even when it's not verbal. This is the story of how boundless determination and unremitting effort can lead to success in any endeavor - a story that I hope inspires people across the globe to push beyond their limits to follow their dreams.

**Leslie Shampaine**



**THE TEAM** (Team Head shots found [HERE](#))

### **ABOUT THE FILM PARTICIPANTS**

#### **MANISH CHAUHAN | LEAD PROTAGONIST**

Manish Chauhan is from Mumbai and self-taught in the urban street dance known as b-boying. He competed in popular reality TV shows like *India's Got Talent* and *Dance India Dance*. Manish studied ballet at the Danceworx School in Mumbai under the Israeli-American teacher, Yehuda Ma'or. In 2020, Chauhan played the leading role in the Netflix film, *Yeh Ballet*, a fictionalized version of his life. He is also the lead character in a documentary *Call Me Dancer* that was released in 2023. Manish is currently a dancer with Peridance Contemporary Dance Company in New York City.

#### **YEHUDA MAOR | LEAD PROTAGONIST**

Yehuda Maor is an acclaimed Israeli ballet teacher working in India. He started his career as a principal dancer with the Bat-Dor dance Company in Tel-Aviv. After leaving the stage he taught dancers around the globe, including ballet greats Rudolf Nureyev and Natalia Makarova. He was the director of Dancer's Stage in San Francisco and Ballet Madison, USA. The Netflix film, *Yeh Ballet*, is a dramatized story about his arrival in India and his teaching, he is played by the actor, Julian Sands. He is also featured in the 2023 documentary, *Call Me Dancer*.

## **LESLIE SHAMPAINÉ | DIRECTOR - PRODUCER**



Short bio: Leslie has been telling stories throughout her professional life. From the ballet stage where she performed throughout the world during a 13-year career, to the television screen where she has produced award-winning programs for PBS, Discovery Channel, A&E, CBS, and Al Jazeera.

Longer bio: Leslie has been telling stories throughout her professional life. From the ballet stage where she performed throughout the world during a 13-year career, to the television screen where she has produced award-winning programs for PBS, Discovery Channel, A&E, CBS, and Al Jazeera.

Her work ranges from documentaries to cultural and educational programming and includes 8 years as part of the production team for the Emmy award-winning Kennedy Center Honors where she worked on over 30 biographical films of the Honorees. Selected credits include the PBS programs *One World: India*, *Avoiding Armageddon*, and *Closer To Truth*; *Who Betrayed Anne Frank* (Discovery Channel) – winner of a Telly, a Cine Golden Eagle, and a Gold Remi at the Houston WorldFest; *DC Cupcakes* (TLC); Smithsonian Networks series' *Seriously Amazing Objects*; and *Fireworks*, with George Plimpton (A&E), which was nominated for an Emmy and an ACE.



## **PIP GILMOUR | Co-DIRECTOR**



Short Bio: Pip Gilmour is a seasoned director/producer/writer. Her work has garnered her awards and top ratings from festivals and networks including New York Film Festival, Worldfest Houston Film Festival, the Television, Internet & Video Association award, Southern Shorts Film Festival, Codie Award, Peer Award, Invision Awards and others.

Longer Bio: Pip is a seasoned director, producer, and writer with the experience to generate powerful documentaries that entertain, engage, and stimulate discussion, producing long and short form documentaries for broadcast and nonbroadcast for over 25 years. Gilmour has traveled the world working with scientists, engineers, anthropologists, indigenous tribes, community activists, farmers, and multiple historians on stories ranging from spies that gave away the nuclear bomb to medicinal plants of the Indonesian rainforest. Beyond her documentary work, Pip has been involved with television dramas for Fox, ABC, CBS, as well as narrative features and shorts. Her work has garnered her awards and top ratings from festivals and networks including New York Film Festival, Worldfest Houston Film Festival, the Television, Internet & Video Association award, Southern Shorts Film Festival, Codie Award, Peer Award, Invision Awards, and others.

Pip is a member of the Producers Guild of America.

## **JAY SEAN | SINGER-SONGWRITER & EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**



Born in London to Indian parents, Jay emerged in the American Pop music scene with his Billboard Hot 100 #1 single “Down” featuring Lil Wayne. This made him the first British artist to top the Hot 100 since Freddie Mercury of Queen in 1980, and the first solo artist of Asian descent.

He started in the UK's Asian Underground and popularized Indian-R&B fusion sounds among the worldwide South Asian diaspora. He tours the world, is always writing another hit and remains a fixture in international music. His most recent release Nakhre with Rishi Rich hit #1 on the UK Asian charts for two weeks in a row!

### **NAINITA DESAI | COMPOSER**

Nainita is an Emmy and RTS award-winning composer and was recently labeled as one of the top 5 composers of the year by Empire magazine. She began her career as a sound designer on feature films for directors including Werner Herzog and Bertolucci, as well as assistant music engineering for Peter Gabriel.

Nainita is the World Soundtrack Awards 2021 winner for Discovery of the Year. A double BIFA and Cinema Eye Honors nominee; BAFTA Breakthrough Brit, and IFMCA Breakthrough Composer of the year 2019.

Her work includes Oscar-nominated documentary, For Sama, Sundance 2020's winning narrative feature The Reason I Jump; Bad Boy Billionaires (Netflix's #1 series in India), American Murder (Netflix's #1-watched documentary to date), Sophy: A Murder in West Cork (Netflix – from Oscar-winning producer Simon Chinn), BBC's drama series Unprecedented (with James Norton and Olivia Williams), The Day That Changed Britain from filmmaker Kevin MacDonald, and Interactive Games' video game Telling Lies – the acclaimed release by Annapurna Interactive.

### **NINA HUMPHREYS | COMPOSER**

Nina is UK based composer best known for her scores to primetime fiction, initially winning the 'Royal Television Society Award for Best Original Score' to Sword of Honour (Channel 4's adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's World War II trilogy starring Daniel Craig). Her work has since crossed the diverse genres of Period Dramas (The Night Watch with Claire Foy) to Comedies (The Robinsons starring Martin Freeman) and Thrillers (In Plain Sight) to Sci-fi (A for Andromeda with Tom Hardy).

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Directors

Leslie Shampaine

Pip Gilmour

Executive Producers

Jay Sean

John Patrick King

Ori Z Soltes

Jitin Hingorani

Leslie Shampaine

Diana Holtzberg

Esther van Messel

Producers

Priya Ramasubban
Cynthia Kane
Leslie Shampaine

Directors of Photography

Neil Barrett
Abhijit Datta (known as “Hojo”)

Editor

Jennifer Beman

Consulting Editor

Hemal Trivedi

Associate Editor

Anand Gautam

Composer

Nainita Desai
Nina Humphreys

Associate Producers

Rukmini Moulik
Neha Sharma



TRAILER EMBED CODE

To share the trailer from CALL ME DANCER on your website, please either link to or embed the versions we've listed below. You may not duplicate and/or upload/host your own version of the trailer.

YOUTUBE:

<https://youtu.be/hrggaXfqsPc?si=Lb8sJopzpo0YivDy>

```
<iframe width="560" height="315"
src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/hrggaXfqsPc?si=Lb8sJopzpo0YivDy" title="YouTube
video player" frameborder="0" allow="accelerometer; autoplay; clipboard-write;
encrypted-media; gyroscope; picture-in-picture; web-share" allowfullscreen></iframe>
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VIMEO:

<https://vimeo.com/877612865?share=copy>

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picture-in-picture" style="position:absolute;top:0;left:0;width:100%;height:100%;"
title="OFFICIAL TRAILER | CALL ME DANCER"></iframe></div><script
src="https://player.vimeo.com/api/player.js"></script>
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FACEBOOK:

<https://www.facebook.com/Abramorama/videos/1370198790249344/?mibextid=zDhOQc>

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<iframe
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frameborder="0" allowfullscreen="true" allow="autoplay; clipboard-write; encrypted-media;
picture-in-picture; web-share" allowFullScreen="true"></iframe>
```

DOWNLOADABLE TRAILER:

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/877864380>

Password: TrailerCMD

CONTACT US!

Film Festivals, Educational, Community Screenings, and Other Inquiries
callmedancermovie@gmail.com

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**Media / Press**



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