

**19 MARCH 2021 - PRESS RELEASE**

**FOOTSTEPS ON THE WIND**

**Imaginative Animation Short Featuring Music by  
17-Time Grammy Award Winning Artist, Sting**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Footsteps on the Wind, a film by Maya Sanbar in collaboration with Dirty Work, is the first animated film short inspired by Sting's music.**

**The film is an imaginative, beautifully crafted animation short that follows the plight of Noor and her little brother, Josef as they journey far from home. Entirely produced during lockdown, it is a truly international collaboration involving more than 100 professionals based in London (UK), Sao Paulo (Brazil), and New York.**

Maya Sanbar, acclaimed Palestinian-Lebanese director and multimedia artist, who herself was displaced, has joined forces with Brazilian film production company Dirty Work to create an animated film to the haunting tune, "Inshallah". World-renowned singer songwriter, actor and activist Sting, penned the song in 2016 in an effort to raise awareness of the growing refugee crisis around the world.

Sanbar's London based Chasing Light Studio and Dirty Work Productions in Sao Paulo, have been working since early 2020 on the story of two children who lose their parents tragically and must travel to safety on a mysterious journey. While dealing with themes of child migration, the film is meant as a storytelling tool for all trauma and feelings of loss and hope.

Based in Sao Paulo, Dirty Work is an award-winning film production company, with vast experience in animation since 2013. They specialise in both advertising and international creative content.

This magical and thought-provoking narrative is currently previewing virtually at the United Nations, and the film will be fully released world-wide during 2021. Maya Sanbar curated the exhibit about refugees, celebrating 70 years of the UN High Commission of Refugees and the United Nation's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The films' characters and graphics were used to highlight themes of seeing, hearing and making. As Sanbar states, "It was important during lock-down to explore the senses that we missed so much in isolation."

*"Songs are like empathy machines, whereas you write about a situation while empathizing with the characters in that situation, and then the listener often empathizes with the people in that situation. The situation I was talking about were these families escaping danger in rubber boats trying to cross the Mediterranean to get to safety.*

*I'm a father; I'm a grandfather. I imagined myself in that situation wanting to bring my family to safety in a very dangerous situation. The word "Inshallah"- which means "if God is willing, then it shall come to pass" - sounded to me like a prayer that people in this situation would be saying. And then the song practically wrote itself."*

Sting

The film has no spoken words, other than the lyrics of the song, and its emotional themes are universal. It is hoped the film can be used as a therapeutic intervention for displaced and traumatized children, and the film-makers will be offering it for free to NGOs and community groups working with refugees. The script development process involved the testimony of refugees, and their key workers in refugee camps. In addition, the team held workshops with refugees in London. These young people contributed in a fundamental way to the realization of this project.

*“Being part of the process of making this film, during lockdown, has been a really deep experience for all of us. It has been a way of reaching through, across borders. We have designed the film with characters that encapsulate many different races: the refugee story is planetary. Animation allows symbolism and space for the viewer’s imagination to transgress words: there are many layers to uncover in the treasure hunt of clues within the script. We’ve taken fairytale references like Alice in Wonderland, Jack and the Beanstalk, Wizard of Oz, Hansel and Gretel, age old stories that are sometimes scary, but they help find ways of dealing with trauma. And making this about all kinds of loss and resilience, whether within or outside of the depths of the refugee experience, was important for us as it’s conceived as a storytelling tool for trauma therapy.”*

Maya Sanbar

*“People can’t imagine how is it to be a refugee or what it might be like to leave behind your dreams, culture, and identity to follow a path of uncertainty, in an ocean of the unknown. We hope that this film can raise awareness and make the difference in these people’s lives”*

Faga Melo and Gustavo Leal

*“Producing this film was an inspired effort for everybody on the team. It was also a challenge due to our pandemic situation. The film was made in 152 production days during COVID 19 lockdown. We created 8,000 animated frames in 10 acts, and the story is told through 110 scenes, with almost 200 hand illustrated shots. To make this project happen, we’ve involved around 100 passionate people that work in the film industry around the globe.”*

Ito Andery and Hwira’ti Gibin

This British-Brazilian co-production aims to entertain and educate by exploring the reality of unaccompanied refugee children, as told from a child’s perspective. It recalls fairy tales like “Alice in Wonderland”, and “Jack and the Beanstalk” as the children disappear into imaginary worlds and survive adversity. At one point, a giant octopus with human hands chases the children across the sea floor, a reminder of all the children who have disappeared each year, and miraculously they are able to re-purpose their house into a sailboat.

After careful research and story development with award-winning producer Gillian Gordon and writers Sita Brahmachari and Onjali Rauf, Maya Sanbar with the Brazilian film production company Dirty Work started work on visualizing the story to Sting's music.

## **The Team**

Music by Sting

Film by Maya Sanbar

Directed by Gustavo Leal, Faga Melo and Maya Sanbar

Produced by Gillian Gordon and Fernanda Zaffari

Executive Producers: Sting, Bobby Sager, Sawsan Asfari, Ito Andery and Hwira'ti Gibin

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