



THE AGA KHAN STUDS
A Centenary of Success

A Game of Chess with Nature
Celebrating 100 Years of the Aga Khan Studs

“It’s so exciting, a constant challenge. Every time you sit down to make decisions on matings you are playing a game of chess with nature.”

I did not expect to be an owner. When I took over the breeding and racing operation of my father and grandfather, I had to undertake a tremendous learning curve in order to continue the great tradition they had established. I was humble but eager, every day was a learning experience. I have been fortunate to be surrounded by knowledgeable people from whom I learned a great deal, and to work with dedicated teams of staff, as well as highly talented jockeys and trainers who have contributed to the success of the Aga Khan silks through the years.

My family and I have been lucky to see some outstanding horses race in our colours. Many stem from initial purchases made by my grandfather in the 1920s - families that have been nurtured, developed and complemented by additions along the way. These horses have been the backbone of our operation and it gives me pride and joy to see them thrive to this day. Nature is a great teacher – you move one way, it dictates you move that way – but we try to understand it and work with it, and it makes for a fascinating and thrilling game of chess.

It is a great pleasure to mark 100 years of the Aga Khan Studs through this film, and to revisit some of the most memorable moments in our history. I hope you will enjoy it, and that we can look forward to celebrating many more champions together in the future.

His Highness the Aga Khan

August 2022



Haras de Bonneval
Normandy, France



The Aga Khan III
with Bahram



Prince Aly Khan
with Petite Etoile

The Aga Khan III

1922

First winners in Britain, notably the fillies **Cos** and **Teresina**. The grey 'Flying Filly' **Mumtaz Mahal** is purchased as a yearling.

1923

Purchase of **Sheshoon Stud** in County Kildare – today the oldest continuously operative stud in both England and Ireland.

1924

The first of 13 Leading Owner titles in England follows the victories of **Diophon** (2000 Guineas) and **Salmon Trout** (St Leger). **Pot Au Feu** wins the Prix du Jockey Club.

1925

Zionist wins the Irish Derby, leading to a first Leading Owner title in Ireland.

1927

Purchase of **Haras de Saint Crespin** in Normandy.

1930

Blenheim provides a first Epsom Derby victory, carrying the second colours. **Rustom Pasha** is Champion Horse in Great Britain.

1934

Umidwar takes the Champion Stakes, a second consecutive victory in the race for his owner following **Dastur** the previous year.

1935

Unbeaten homebred **Bahram** takes the English Triple Crown.

1936

Mahmoud and **Taj Akbar** finish first and second in the Derby, clocking a race record time.

1942

Nasrullah, a grandson of **Mumtaz Mahal** bred by the Aga Khan III, is crowned Champion Two-Year-Old Colt in Great Britain. **Majideh** is Champion Three-Year-Old Filly in Ireland.

1948

Masaka is Champion Three-Year-Old Filly in Great Britain and Ireland. **Migoli** wins the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe.

1950

Classic winner **Palestine** is Champion Horse in Great Britain.

1952

Tulyar wins the Derby, a fifth victory in the race for his owner (a 20th century record).

Prince Aly Khan

1957

Takes over the bloodstock interests following the death of the Aga Khan III. **Rose Royale** is Champion Three-Year-Old Filly in France.

1959

A brilliant Classic season features **Petite Etoile** (1000 Guineas and Oaks), **Taboun** (2000 Guineas), **Ginetta** (Poule d'Essai des Pouliches), and **Fiorentina** (Irish 1000 Guineas). **Saint Crespin III** takes the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe.

“I wanted to do the thing thoroughly, or not at all.”



H.H. the Aga Khan
with Shergar

H.H the Aga Khan

1960

Takes over the operation following the death of Prince Aly Khan. Wins a first French Owners' championship, aided by **Charlottesville's** victories in the Prix du Jockey Club and Grand Prix de Paris. **Petite Etoile** is Champion Older Horse.

1963

Purchase of **Haras de Bonneval**.

1964

François Mathet becomes principal trainer.

1966

Silver Shark (winner of the Prix de l'Abbaye as a two-year-old) is Champion Miler in France at three.

1968

Zeddaan's Poule d'Essai des Poulains win marks a first Classic victory for the partnership with Mathet and Yves Saint-Martin.

1973

Kalamoun, a son of Zeddaan, lands a hat-trick of Group 1 races.

1976

Blushing Groom is crowned French Champion Two-Year-Old after winning four Group 1 races.

1977

The bloodstock of **François Dupré** is purchased and Aiglemont training centre is opened.

1978

Acquisition of the breeding operation of **Marcel Boussac**.

1981

Shergar breaks the record for the widest winning margin in the Derby (10 lengths).

1982

First Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe win for the Aga Khan with **Akiyda**.

1983

Alain de Royer Dupré starts training at Aiglemont.

1984

A vintage renewal of the Prix du Jockey Club sees **Darshaan** defeat **Sadler's Wells** and **Rainbow Quest**. **Lashkari** wins the first edition of the Breeders' Cup Turf.

1988

First horses in training in Ireland.

1992

Gilltown and **Sallymount Studs** are bought back.

1997

75 years of racing and breeding are marked with four Classic wins: **Daylami** (Poule d'Essai des Poulains), **Ebadiyla** (Irish Oaks and Prix Royal-Oak) and **Vereva** (Prix de Diane).

1998

Investment in the modernisation of Chantilly racecourse.

1999

Daryaba wins a third consecutive Prix de Diane for the Aga Khan, who is voted 'Owner of the Century' by Paris Turf readers.



2000

Sindar becomes the first three-year-old to win the Derby, Irish Derby and Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe in the same season. Revival of the French breeding operation.

2003

Dalakhani is crowned Horse of the Year.

2005

Purchase of the bloodstock operation of **Jean-Luc Lagardère**, including Haras d'Ouilly and Haras de Tupot. **Azamour** wins his third and fourth Group 1 races.

2007

Darjina wins a hat-trick of Group 1s in the colours of Princess Zahra Aga Khan, emulating **Mandesha** the year before.

2008

Undefeated five-time Group 1 winner **Zarkava** is Horse of the Year.

2009

A memorable Arc weekend sees five Group 1 and two Group 2 victories in the Aga Khan silks, including **Siyouni** in the Prix Jean-Luc Lagardère. **Sea The Stars** wins the Arc itself for the Tsui family before retiring to Gilttown Stud.

2010

The Aga Khan celebrates a milestone 50 years at the helm of the racing operation. **Sarafina** and **Rosanara** finish first and second in the Prix de Diane.



H.H. the Aga Khan and Princess Zahra Aga Khan with Zarkava

2012

Valyra records a record seventh victory for the Aga Khan in the Prix de Diane.

2015

A first Leading Sire title for **Siyouni**, following his first crop daughter **Ervedya**'s three Group 1 successes.

2016

Harzand becomes the fifth Aga Khan horse to complete the English and Irish Derby double.

2017

A 150th Group 1 victory for H.H. the Aga Khan and Princess Zahra Aga Khan, courtesy of **Vazirabad** in the Prix du Cadran.

2019

Inauguration of The Aga Khan Grandstand at The Curragh.

2020

An unbeaten four-year-old campaign for **Tarnawa** sees her take three Group 1 victories, including the Breeders' Cup Turf.

2021

Zarak, a descendant of **Mumtaz Mahal**, takes the Leading First Season Sire title in France. The Aga Khan earns a 15th French Owner championship.

2022

Vadani becomes the Aga Khan's eighth winner of the Prix du Jockey Club and first winner of the Eclipse Stakes.

Vadeni winning the
Gr.1 Prix du Jockey Club



A WORD FROM THE DIRECTORS

By Fanny Hubart-Salmon, Co-Director of 'A Game of Chess with Nature'

In January 2019, the phone rang. Aline Giraud of the Aga Khan Studs was wondering if we could meet to discuss an upcoming project. Little did she know how much time we would spend on the phone, or in person, exchanging on said project over the next three years.

It was both humbling and exhilarating for Dimitrie and me to be considered. We had nurtured the hope of one day working on a historical project for the Aga Khan Studs. This exceeded every filmmaker's dream.

The mere idea of digging in the archives filled me with joy, while Dimitrie was excited at the prospect of creating something extraordinary. Conventional treatment would fail to convey the incredible achievements of the Aga Khan family over its first 100 years of involvement on the Western Turf scene. The trust placed in us also came with a deep sense of responsibility; excellence is a core value of the operation. What we delivered had to align.

Having interviewed His Highness the Aga Khan, individually and collaboratively for previous films, we were eager to build a narrative around his own words and recollections of the incredible journey. This film had to be told by the individuals who shared the experiences. The narrator was to take a step back, only coming in to fill in the gaps...

It was also clear to us that we would adopt a non-linear approach. It was crucial to show the continuity of the bloodlines and the family's commitment, yet we felt a classic chronological treatment would be tiresome. We decided to anchor the film in the present to keep it lively and reflect the circular nature of the operation.

Early on, we identified one of our biggest challenges: the lack of witnesses for the early days. I will never forget the emotion I felt when I first heard the voice of the Aga Khan's grandfather. We were extremely fortunate to be able to build segments around it. We were determined not to create filmed versions of encyclopaedia entries, applying visuals on a fixed text. We chose instead to pick appealing footage and testimonies and recreate for the viewer the impression they left upon us.

What you will see is not the full story. That would never fit in a screening. It wouldn't even fit in a 12 part series! We had originally pitched a 52-minute film. Very early in the process, however, when reviewing with the team at the Aga Khan Studs the list of the horses, key dates and witnesses we aimed to include, it appeared an unrealistic format. Hence, the four episodes, each focusing on a season of the year. We still had to make excruciating cuts, choices and compromises to come to this result, but that is part of the process.

Continues >



Gilltown Stud
Co Kildare, Ireland

< *Continued*

What is not part of the regular process in filmmaking was the pandemic. A long series of lockdowns started soon after we formalized the project. We spent over a year scheduling, cancelling, rescheduling, and postponing. We saw the seasons come and go, still with no hope of travelling. We had to review our expectations and amend our original plans.

We are extremely grateful for the continuous support from the Aga Khan Studs team. Where others might have pulled the plug, they worked with us to adapt.

In 2021, we came to film and stayed on the farm by the foaling barn at Haras de Saint Crespin. A radical change of scenery for Dimitrie, who had been in Paris since Covid started. I had stayed home in Deauville, but now we were back to doing our job! We got to wake up at dawn with the horses. We went to bed, ready to jump out at the promise of a foaling. Again, the team delivered on their promise. We eventually made it to Ireland later that autumn for 10 intense and fulfilling filming days. We are grateful to Stella Powell and Alan Grattan at Blue Silk Productions, who, on the recommendation of the Aga Khan Studs, stepped in. Without them, it would not have been possible to document key parts of the seasons' cycle.

There were many magic moments in the course of making this film. This was a unique experience for us. Never before had

we worked on a film of this scope commissioned by a private entity. It is rare at a time when trends lean towards short-term strategies and short-lived content. Not only did the Aga Khan Studs commit to a long-term and long-form project, they opened their archives and their doors, letting us roam on the farms. They answered and anticipated our questions. We can truly say this film was not just made for the Aga Khan Studs. It was co-created with its team, creative and resourceful.

We were inspired by their energy and their testimony (on and off camera). They each express the same respect not only for the legacy of the Aga Khan family in the thoroughbred world, but also for the values the family upholds. Their respect for all beings, equine and human, transpired in every interview. We hope it does in the film as well.

More than anything we want to express our warmest thanks to His Highness the Aga Khan and Princess Zahra Aga Khan for the time they granted us out of their busy schedule, and for the grace and authenticity they showed. They kindly turned a formal interview into an insightful conversation, giving us a chance to witness their humour and their bond around their love for horses.

We hope you will be as inspired by what you see, as we were in capturing it.



The late Aga Khan
in France
Prince Aly Khan
in France (1957-60)
The present Aga Khan



The late Aga Khan
in Great Britain
Prince Aly Khan
in Great Britain (1957-60)
Second colours of the present
Aga Khan in Great Britain



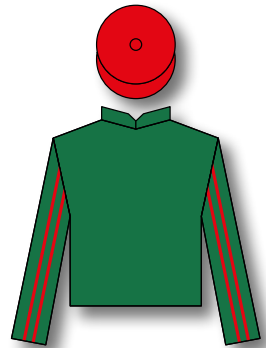
The late Aga Khan's
first registered colours in India



The late Aga Khan
in India (1924-40)



Prince Aly Khan
in France (1932-56)



Prince Aly Khan
in Great Britain (1930-35)
and in India



Prince Aly Khan in
Great Britain (1936-56)



Princess Zahra Aga Khan

THE AGA KHAN STUDS

GROUP 1 WINNERS SINCE 1961

Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe

1982 Akiyda
2000 Sinddar
2003 Dalakhani
2008 Zarkava

Poule d'Essai des Poulains

1968 Zeddaan
1973 Kalamoun
1977 *Blushing Groom*
1978 Nishapour
1996 Ashkalani
1997 Daylami
1999 Sendawar

Poule d'Essai des Pouliches

1984 Masarika
1998 Zalaiyka
2007 Darjina
2008 Zarkava
2015 Ervedya

Prix de Diane

1993 Shemaka
1997 Vereva
1998 Zainta
1999 Daryaba
2008 Zarkava
2010 Sarafina
2012 Valyra

Prix du Jockey Club

1979 *Top Ville*
1984 Darshaan
1985 Mouktar
1987 Natroun
2003 Dalakhani
2006 Darsi
2022 Vadeni

Grand Prix de Paris

1985 Sumayr
1995 Valanour
2002 Khalkevi
2008 *Montmartre*
2010 Behkabad
2017 Shakeel

Prix Royal Oak

1997 Ebadiyla
1998 Tiraaz
2015 Vazirabad
2016 Vazirabad

Prix du Cadran

1980 Shafaraz
1999 Tajoun
2009 Alandi
2017 Vazirabad

Prix de l'Opéra

2006 Mandesha
2009 Shalanaya
2012 Ridasiyna
2013 Dalkala
2020 Tarnawa

Prix de la Forêt

2009 Varenar

Prix de l'Abbaye

de Longchamp
1965 Silver Shark
1966 Farhana
1974 Moubariz

Prix Vermeille

1983 Sharaya
1986 Darara
1999 Daryaba
2005 Shawanda
2006 Mandesha
2008 Zarkava
2012 Shareta
2020 Tarnawa

Prix du Moulin

de Longchamp
1966 Silver Shark
1996 Ashkalani
1999 Sendawar
2007 Darjina
2015 Ervedya

Prix Morny

1962 Darannour
1976 *Blushing Groom*

Prix Jacques Le Marois

1973 Kalamoun

Prix d'Astarté

2006 Mandesha
2007 Darjina

Grand Prix de Saint-Cloud

1980 Shakapour
1981 Akarad
2011 Sarafina
2017 Zarak

Prix Saint-Alary

1963 Cervinia
1989 Behera
1998 Zainta
2005 *Vadawina*
2010 Sarafina
2012 Sagawara
2014 Vazira
2019 Siyarafina

Prix d'Isphahan

1964 Jour Et Nuit
1966 Silver Shark
1968 Zeddaan
2000 Sendawar
2005 *Valixir*
2008 *Sageburg*

Prix Ganay

1991 Kartajana
1996 Valanour
1998 Astarabad
2016 Dariyan

Crîtérium International

2002 Dalakhani
2005 *Carlottamix*

Prix Marcel Boussac

2007 Zarkava
2009 Rosanara

Prix Jean-Luc Lagardère

1976 *Blushing Groom*
1986 Danishkada
2009 Siyouni

Prix Robert Papin

1967 Zeddaan
1976 *Blushing Groom*
1983 Masarika

Prix Lupin

1973 Kalamoun
1979 *Top Ville*
2003 Dalakhani

Prix de la Salamandre

1976 *Blushing Groom*

Irish Oaks

1997 Ebadiyla
2005 Shawanda

Irish Derby

1981 Shergar
1986 Shahrastani
1988 Kahyasi
2000 Sinddar
2003 Alamshar
2016 Harzand

Irish St. Leger

2006 Kastoria
2009 Alandi

Irish Champion Stakes

1996 Timarida
2004 Azamour

Moyglare Stud Stakes

1998 Edabiya

The Aga Khan Studs

National Stakes

1993 Manntari
1999 Sinddar

2000 Guineas

1988 Doyoun

Epsom Derby

1981 Shergar
1986 Shahrastani
1988 Kahyasi
2000 Sinddar
2016 Harzand

Champion Stakes

1981 Vayrann
2000 Kalanisi

Eclipse Stakes

2022 Vadeni

Yorkshire Oaks

2012 Shareta

International Stakes

1986 Shardari

King George VI &

Queen Elizabeth Stakes

1981 Shergar
2003 Alamshar
2005 Azamour

Ascot Gold Cup

1999 Enzeli

Prince of Wales's Stakes

2005 Azamour

St. James's Palace Stakes

1999 Sendawar
2004 Azamour

Coronation Stakes

2015 Ervedya

Queen Anne Stakes

2005 *Valixir*

Coronation Cup

1961 Petite Etoile
2000 Dalapour

Preis Von Europa

1985 Sumayr

Preis Bayerisches Zuchtrennen

1991 Kartajana
1996 Timarida

Premio Lydia Tesio

1987 Khariyda

Gran Premio di Milano

2006 Shamdala

Breeders' Cup Turf Stakes

1984 Lashkari
2000 Kalanisi
2020 Tarnawa

Beverly D Stakes

1996 Timarida

Secretariat Stakes

2012 Bayrir

Hong Kong Vase

2009 Daryakana

Dubai Sheema Classic

2015 Dolniya

Italic type denotes winners owned but not bred by the Aga Khan Family

A GAME OF CHESS WITH NATURE

Celebrating 100 Years of the Aga Khan Studs

Presented by:

The Aga Khan Studs
and Full Field Agency

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Dimitrie Iordanesco

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Dimitrie Iordanesco

Additional photography:

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Agence Roger Viollet, Rouch Wilmot Thoroughbred
Library, Walter Sanders, Scoop Dyga, Skeets Meador,
The Sport and General Press Agency,
Studio Delaroque, Vergee, A. Well

Music:

Universal Production Music

Archives:

Aga Khan Development Network, Associated Press,
British Pathé, Drew Associates, Equidia,
Equine Productions, Gaumont Pathé,
Goffs / Blue Silk, GTHP, Horse Racing Ireland,
Alain Marie, Racing Media Group, RTE

With the participation of:

His Highness the Aga Khan
Princess Zahra Aga Khan
Prince Amyn Aga Khan
Pat Downes
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John Warren, Dermot Weld, Eddie Wiley
and all the Aga Khan Studs' team

Executive Producer:

Fanny Hubart-Salmon / Full Field Agency

Additional Field Producer:

Stella Powell / Blue Silk Productions

Production Manager:

Anne-Louise Sarteel

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