



Giving a voice to Vilna's virtuosos

AIN STAFF

MELBOURNE movie-goers will have another chance to catch *The Songs They Sang*, a film about the music of the Vilna Ghetto in Lithuania during World War II, with two more screenings scheduled for Thursday July 15 and Monday July 19.

The film, which had its world premiere at the Bayside Film Festival last week, examines the uplifting effect of music on a people struggling to maintain their humanity in the face of appalling atrocity.

The Songs They Sang features performances of the music by families of the Vilna musicians as well as professional musicians, and also includes survivor accounts of the horrors of Vilna.

At the heart of the film is the story of Shmerke Kaczerginski, a composer and Vilna survivor who risked his life to preserve the music of the ghetto and continued compiling works created during the Holocaust after the end of the war.

The film also features interviews with the last remaining Vilna composer Alex Tarnir, who wrote *Shiler, Shiler, (Quiet, Quiet)* when he was just 11, and gives an affecting insight



Filmmaker Rohan Sponger directed *The Songs They Sang*, a documentary about the music of the Vilna Ghetto in Lithuania.

into ghetto life for a child in Vilna.

The film takes in six countries and five languages and features music re-created by some of Australia's most talented musicians.

Director Rohan Sponger is an emerging non-Jewish filmmaker, who was intrigued on learning the Vilna story and consulted with the Jewish Holocaust Museum and Research Centre during the filming of *The Songs They Sang*.

The Songs They Sang will screen on Thursday July 15 and Monday July 19 at Palace Brighton Bay.