

HAF 05 Kabul Melody



REGION: Afghanistan

GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME:

Documentary | Digital Format | Persian | 90mins

DIRECTOR:

Sahra MANI

PRODUCER:

Annie OHAYON-DEKEL

HAF GOALS:

Funds, Co-producers, Sales agents, Pre-sales

BUDGET: US\$ 240,926

SECURED BUDGET: US\$ 83,521

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

2019 *A Thousand Girls Like Me*

ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

In a country where playing music by women is considered perverse, young Afghan female students risk their lives for their musical passion, defying the discrimination and threats they face.

SYNOPSIS

In the heart of Kabul, alongside the sounds of bombs, music sounds escape from a school. Behind barbed wire, under high protection, boys and girls, including street children, study traditional and

classical music together – a singular mix at all levels. Madina plays oboe, Negin is a conductor and Zarifa a violinist. They constantly face social, family and religious challenges in a conservative society. Dr. Sarmast, director of the school, lives in perpetual fear of attacks, having been victim of a suicide bombing in 2014; many videos published by the Taliban on social media refer to the school as a next target. Nevertheless, Dr. Sarmast has managed to create the only female orchestra in Afghanistan, and even to tour in Europe. Returning to Kabul was brutal, accompanied by a resurgence of violence and threats. The three teenagers take us into the paradox of their life made of harmony and violence along a fragile edge where everything can become either happiness or hell, when each opportunity for freedom is given (or allowed by men) but risks being taken over at any time by the same men. Recent events have forced them to choose paths of life they had not imagined and to face situations for which they were not prepared.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I know the meaning of being a citizen, a woman and a filmmaker in Afghanistan. That is why I want to show the hope and the emergence of free will among the women who are creating Afghanistan's future through portraying the struggles of young female musicians. Behind their story, it is also mine. While these teenagers are living amid relatives and neighbours who equate female musicians with prostitutes, they believe that to listen to music is to experience freedom; to play music is to act freely. I know how it is difficult to stand up and fight against fundamentalists in a conservative society whose only answer to "rebellion" is death. These girls know that their freedom is seen as "rebellion", yet they fight. Together with Dr. Sarmast, I believe that education and art represent a soft power for transforming lives and communities.

DIRECTOR

Sahra MANI

Sahra Mani is an Afghan documentary filmmaker who lives and works in Kabul. She obtained her master's degree in documentary filmmaking at University of the Arts London. She is the founder of Afghanistan Documentantary Film House, a production company based in Kabul, Afghanistan. Her work as a producer, director and photographer focus on human rights, equality and justice. In Kabul, Sahra trains and mentors the next generation of correspondents and filmmakers. Her work is primarily focused on giving voice to the women of Afghanistan. Her first long feature, *A Thousand Girls Like Me* (2019), won awards in many festivals.

PRODUCER

Annie OHAYON-DEKEL

Annie Ohayon-Dekel joined 24images, founded by Farid Rezkallah in 1988, in 2016. In charge of international development for features, documentary and short films, she has developed coproduction across Asia and particularly in Taiwan with *Green Jail* (in production) by Huang Yin-Yu and *Loma, Our Home* (in production) by Huang Hui-Chen, in Japan with *Odoriko* (2020) by

Okatani Yoichiro and in the Middle East with *The First 53 Years* by Avi Mograbi (in production) and *Signing* (2018) by Nurith Aviv. *Looking for the Man with the Camera* (2019) by Boutheyna Bouslama won Best Documentary in Visions du Réel 2019.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

24images

Founded in 1988, 24images has a rich catalog of documentaries, short and feature films produced in France and internationally. We have the desire to walk together with the directors and to accompany them when they challenge the world and the cinema. With our international partners we develop worldwide co-productions, we ensure presence in the international markets. Our films are regularly selected in festivals including *Looking for the Man with the Camera* (2019) by Boutheyna Bouslama, *Signing* (2018) by Nurith Aviv, *A Young Patriot* (2015) by Du Haibin, and *Ada for Mayor* (2016) by Pau Faus.