
SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

A SEPARATION

A film by Asghar Farhadi

*Iran's official selection for the 84th Academy Award for
Best Foreign Language Film*

2011 Berlin International Film Festival

Golden Bear Winner (Best Film)

Silver Bear for Best Actress to the actress ensemble

Silver Bear for Best Actor to the actor ensemble

Prize of the Ecumenical Jury

2011 AFI Fest | 2011 New York Film Festival

2011 Telluride Film Festival | 2011 Toronto International Film Festival

2011 Fajr Film Festival, Audience Award Winner

www.aseparationmovie.com

123 min | Rated PG-13 | Language: Farsi (*with English subtitles*)

Release Date (NY/LA): 12/30/2011

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SYNOPSIS

Set in contemporary Iran, *A Separation* is a compelling drama about the dissolution of a marriage. Simin wants to leave Iran with her husband Nader and daughter Termeh. Simin sues for divorce when Nader refuses to leave behind his Alzheimer-suffering father. Her request having failed, Simin returns to her parents' home, but Termeh decides to stay with Nader.

When Nader hires a young woman to assist with his father in his wife's absence, he hopes that his life will return to a normal state. However, when he discovers that the new maid has been lying to him, he realizes that there is more on the line than just his marriage.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I think *A Separation* is a detective story without any detectives. The audience is the one in charge of solving the puzzles; there will be as many answers as audiences. The film raises questions instead of imposing ideas and answers; everyone will focus on the most relevant point according to their own character and emotions. I feel like the time where directors were superior to their public, acting like an advisor or a messenger is past. At the same time, as viewers tend to be less passive and more involved in the story, they choose the angle from which they look at the film. That's why I let the audience be the film detective.

- *Asghar Farhadi*

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

What was the trigger for this film? In what circumstances was the idea born?

I was in Berlin working on a screenplay for a film taking place entirely in this city. One evening, in my friend's kitchen, I heard an Iranian tune playing next door. Suddenly, my mind was overtaken by memories and images linked to another story. I tried to get rid of them, to concentrate on the screenplay I was developing. To no avail, the ideas and images had taken root. They wouldn't let go - in the street, in public transport, I was followed by this embryo of a story from somewhere else, invading my Berlin time. I finally accepted that I was feeling closer to this story every day. So I went back to Iran, and started writing this other screenplay. I guess we could say this film was conceived in a Berlin kitchen...

How do you work with your actors?

I usually take a long time to choose the actors, and this was no exception.

I tend to avoid embarrassing actors with general considerations on the film, or my vision of it. I feel the actor doesn't need the global meaning of the film, but must strive to concentrate on his own character's definition and intentions. My method, in fact, is to adapt to each actor, his or her way of being and doing. But what is constant is the importance of rehearsing. This is when the actors become their characters. Which means that during the shoot, we can concentrate on details, as the outline is already there. We took our time to rehearse, working from a very detailed screenplay, which we followed precisely, to enable each actor to understand the different dimensions of their character. This approach may very well come from my experience with the theater. It doesn't mean propositions or opinions are forbidden, but we agreed that rehearsals were the only place to discuss. Once we started shooting, we agreed that variations would be minimal.

In what conditions did you shoot?

All of the scenes were shot on location. However, for the scenes in the judge's office and in court, as we weren't allowed to shoot in the real location, we built everything in two disaffected schools.

Is the separation at the heart of your film only that of a couple?

I don't think it's important for the audience to know my intention. I'd rather they left the cinema with questions. I believe that the world today needs more questions than answers. Answers prevent you from questioning, from thinking. From the opening scene, I aimed to set this up. The film's first question is whether an Iranian child has a better future in his or her own country or abroad. There is no set answer.

My wish is that this film will make you ask yourselves questions, such as these ones.

The leading characters are both female. Why?

In my films, I try to give a realistic and complex vision of my characters, whether male or female. I don't know why women tend to be more of a driving force. Perhaps it's an unconscious choice.

It could also be that in a society in which women are oppressed, men can also no longer live in peace. Currently, in Iran, it is the women who are struggling most in an attempt to recover the rights they have been deprived of. They are at once more resistant and more determined. But if the two characters both happen to be women, they have nevertheless made very different life choices. Both are trying to save their hide. One is from the poor underclass, with all its attendant particularities, while the other is middle class.

Was it your intention to draw a more contrasted portrait of Iranian women?

Western audiences often have a very fragmented image of the Iranian woman, whom they see as being passive, homebound, far from any kind of social activity. Perhaps a certain number of women in Iran do live like that, but for the most part women are highly present and active in society, and in a much more forthright manner than men, despite the restrictions they are subjected to.

Both kinds of women are present in the film, without either being condemned or proclaimed a heroine. The confrontation between these two women is not that of good versus bad. They are simply two clashing visions of good. And that is where, in my opinion, modern tragedy resides. Conflict sparks between two positive entities, and what I hope is that the viewer will not know whose victory to wish for.

Do you feel it is necessary to know the culture or language to understand all possible reading levels?

It is probably easier for an Iranian audience to establish a complete relationship with the film. Knowing the language, but also the context and social texture in which the story is set will no doubt open up less obvious interpretations.

Yet at the heart of the story is a married couple. Marriage is a form of relationship between two human beings, unrelated to the period or society in which it is set. And the issue of human relationships is not specific to a given place or culture. It is one of modern society's most essential and complex concerns. So I feel that the subject of the film makes it accessible to a wider public, beyond geographical, cultural or linguistic frontiers.

DIRECTOR'S PROFILE

ASGHAR FARHADI

Asghar Farhadi was born in 1972 in Isfahan, Iran. Whilst at school he became interested in writing, drama and the cinema, took courses at the Iranian Young Cinema Society and started his career as a filmmaker by making super 8mm and 16mm films.

He graduated with a Master's Degree in Film Direction from Tehran University in 1998. During his studies, he wrote and directed several student plays, wrote for the national radio and directed a number of TV series, including episodes of *Tale of a City*.

In 2001, Farhadi wrote the screenplay for Ebrahim Hatamikia's box-office and critical success *Low Heights*.

His directorial debut was in 2003 with *Dancing in the Dust*. After *Beautiful City*, in 2004, and *Fireworks Wednesday* in 2006, Farhadi directed *About Elly*, winning the Silver Bear for Best Director at the 2009 Berlin International Film Festival and Best Narrative Feature at the 2009 Tribeca Film Festival.

A Separation is his fifth feature.

Filmography

- 2011 *A Separation* (Jodaeiye Nader az Simin)
- 2009 *About Elly* (Darbareye Elly)
 - Winner: Silver Bear for Best Director, 2009 Berlin International Film Festival
 - Winner: Best Narrative Feature, 2009 Tribeca Film Festival
- 2006 *Fireworks Wednesday* (Chahar shanbeh souri)
- 2004 *Beautiful City* (Shahr-e Ziba)
- 2003 *Dancing in the Dust* (Raghss dar ghobar)

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Leila Hatami (Simin)

As a young girl, Leila Hatami made appearances in her father (Ali Hatami)'s feature films and television series. After finishing high school, Hatami moved to Lausanne, Switzerland, where she completed a degree in French Literature before moving back to Iran where she made her professional acting debut in *Leila* by acclaimed Iranian director Dariush Mehrjui. Her performance earned her the Diploma of Honor for Best Actress from the 15th Fajr Film Festival along with rave reviews from critics and audiences. Her role in *The Deserted Station* (2002) won her the Best Actress Award from the 26th Montreal World Film Festival. She also appeared in her husband Ali Mosaffa's first film as a director, *Portrait of a Lady Far Away* (2005).

Filmography

- 2011 *A Separation* (dir. Asghar Farhadi)
Winner: Silver Bear Award for Best Actress, 2011 Berlin Film Festival (with Sareh Bayat and Sarina Farhadi)
- 2010 *These Are Things You Don't Know* (dir. Fardin Saheb Zamani)
What a Wonderful Life; Lovely Sky (*Aseman-e mahboob*, dir. Dariush Mehrjui)
Roaming in the Mist (*Parseh dar Meh*, dir. Bahram Tavakkoli)
- 2009 *40 Years Old* (*Chehel Salegi*, dir. Alireza Raeisian)
- 2008 *Shirin* (dir. Abbas Kiarostami)
Pennilessness (*Bi Pooli*, dir. Hamid Nematollah)
Best Actress Award, 2009 Fajr Film Festival
Paridokht (Saman Moghaddam, 2007–2008) (TV Series)
- 2007 *Every Night Loneliness* (*Har Shab Tanhayi*, dir. Rasoul Sadrameli)
- 2005 *Poet of the Wastes* (*Shaer-e Zobale-ha*, dir. Mohammad Ahmadi)
Hokm (dir. Masoud Kimiai)
Salad of the Season (*Salad-e Fasl*, dir. Fereydun Jeyrani)
Portrait of a Lady Far Away (*Sima-ye Zani Dar Doordast*, dir. Ali Mosaffa)
- 2002 *The Deserted Station* (*Istgah-e Matrouk*, dir. Alireza Raeisian)
Best Actress (tied) for *Deserted Station*, 2002 Montreal Film Festival
Low Attitude/Low Heights (*Ertefae Past*, dir. Ebrahim Hatamikia)
- 2001 *The Sweet Jam* (*Moraba-ye Shirin*, dir. Marzieh Boroomand)
Water and Fire (*Ab va Atash*, dir. Fereydun Jeyrani)
Best Actress in a leading role, from 5th Ceremony of Khaneh Cinema, 2001
- 2000 *The English Bag* (*Keef-e Englisi*, dir. Seyyed Ziaeddin Dorri) (TV series)
The Mix (dir. Dariush Mehrjui)
- 1998 *Sheida* (dir. Kamal Tabrizi)
- 1996 *Leila* (dir. Dariush Mehrjui)
Honorary Diploma for Performance in a Leading Role for *Leila*, 1997 Fajr Film Festival
- 1992 *The Love Stricken* (*DelShodegan*, dir. Ali Hatami)
- 1984 *Kamalolmolk* (dir. Ali Hatami)

Peyman Moadi (Nader)

Peyman Moadi was born in New York in 1971 to an Iranian couple who moved the family to Iran when Moadi was 2. After graduating from Karaj Azad University with a degree in Metallurgical Engineering, he went on to become a prolific screenwriter in Iran.

As an actor, Moadi was awarded the 2011 Berlin International Film Festival's Silver Bear for Best Actor (with Shahab Hosseini, Babak Karimi and Ali-Asghar Shahbazi) for his role in *A Separation*. This is his second collaboration with director Asghar Farhadi, who directed him in *About Elly* (2009).

Filmography

Writer

- 2006 *Cafe Setareh* (dir. Saman Moghadam)
- Shaam-e aroosi* (dir. Ebrahim Vahidzadeh)
- 2004 *Coma* (dir. Arash Moirian)
- 2002 *Atash* (dir. Hossein FarahBakhsh)
- 2000 *Swan Song* (dir. Saeed Assadi)

Actor

- 2011 *Mourning (post-production)* (dir. Morteza Farshbaf)
- A Separation* (dir. Asghar Farhadi)
Winner: Silver Bear Award for Best Actor, 2011 Berlin International Film Festival (with Shahab Hosseini, Babak Karimi and Ali-Asghar Shahbazi)
- 2009 *About Elly* (dir. Asghar Farhadi)

Shahab Hosseini (Hodjat)

Shahab Hosseini was born in 1974 in Tehran. A psychology student at the University of Tehran, he started his career as a radio host, and hosted a TV show for the youth audience. His acting career was launched with performances in films such as *This Woman Does Not Speak* and *A Candle in the Wind*.

Filmography

- 2011 *A Separation* (dir. Asghar Farhadi)
Winner: Silver Bear for Best Actor, 2011 Berlin International Film Festival (with Peyman Moadi, Babak Karimi and Ali-Asghar Shahbazi)
Honorary Diploma for performance in a Supporting role 2011 Fajr Film Festival
- Africa* (dir. Hooman Seidi)
- Khane-ye Pedari* (dir. Kiyanoush Ayari)
- Sout-e Payan* (dir. Niki Karimi)
- 2010 *Parse Dar Meh* (dir. Bahram Tavkoli)
- Havali-e Outoban* (dir. Siyavash Asaadi)

- 2010 *Anahita* (dir. Azizollah Hamidnejad)
- 2009 *Reporter* (dir. Ayaz Sayalof)
About Elly (dir. Asghar Farhadi)
 Best Actor in a leading role, 2010 Ceremony of Khaneh Cinema,
Superstar (dir. Tahmineh Milani)
 Best Actor in a leading role, 2009 Fajr Film Festival
- 2008 *Flags of Kaveh's Castle* (dir. Mohammad Norizad)
Del Shekasteh (dir. Ali Rooyintan)
Mahya (dir. Akbar Khajooyi)
 Honorary Diploma for performance in a leading role, 2008 Fajr Film Festival,
- 2008 *Niloofar* (dir. Sabine El Gemayel)
- 2007 *Eden Station* (dir. Nader Moghadas)
Bacheha-ye Abadi (dir. Poursan Derakhshandeh)
Love Story (dir. Bijan Birang)
Zero Degree Turn (dir. Hassan Fathi) (TV series)
- 2006 *Online Murder* (dir. Masoud Abparvar)
- 2005 *Salvation at 8:20* (dir. Sirous Alvand)
Gerdab (dir. Hassan Hedayat)
- 2004 *A Candle in the Wind* (dir. Poursan Derakhshandeh)
- 2003 *The Fifth Reaction* (dir. Tahmineh Milani)
Zahr-e asal (dir. Ebrahim Sheibani)
This Woman Does Not Speak (dir. Ahmad Amini)
- 2002 *Adamak-ha* (dir. Ali Ghavitan)
Rokhsareh (dir. Amir Ghavidel)

Sareh Bayat (Razieh)

A Separation is Sareh Bayat's second collaboration with Asghar Farhadi. She previously worked with him on the 2006 TV series *Yek Mosht Par-e Oghab*. Bayat has since acted in films including Afshin Sadeghi's *Moghaled-e Sheitan*, as well as the television series *Banoo* and *Bi-gonahan*. She shared the 2011 Berlin International Film Festival's Silver Bear for Best Actress with Leila Hatami and Sarina Farhadi for *A Separation*.

Filmography

- 2011 *A Separation* (dir. Asghar Farhadi)
 Winner: Silver Bear for Best Actress, 2011 Berlin International Film Festival (with Leila Hatami and Sarina Farhadi)
- 2009 *Banoo* (dir. Hassan Hedayat) (TV series)
- 2008 *Bi-gonahan* (dir. Ahmad Amini) (TV series)
- 2007 *Moghaled-e Sheitan* (dir. Afshin Sadeghi)
- 2006 *Yek Mosht Par-e Oghab* (dir. Asghar Hashemi) (TV series)

CAST

Simin	Leila Hatami
Nader	Peyman Moadi
Hodjat	Shahab Hosseini
Razieh	Sareh Bayat
Termeh	Sarina Farhadi
Judge	Babak Karimi
Nader's father	Ali-Asghar Shahbazi
Simin's mother	Shirin Yazdanbakhsh
Somayeh	Kimia Hosseini
Ms. Ghahraei	Merila Zarei

CREW

Written and Directed by	Asghar Farhadi
Producer	Asghar Farhadi
Director of Photography	Mahmood Kalari
Editor	Hayedeh Safiyari
Set Designer	Keyvan Moghadam
Costume Designer	Keyvan Moghadam
Make-Up Designer	Mehرداد Mirkiani
Sound Designer	Mohammad Reza Delpak
Sound Editor	Reza Narimizadeh
Production Sound Mixer	Mahmood Sammakbashi
Production Manager	Hassan Mostafavi
First Assistant Director	Hamid Reza Ghorbani
Continuity Supervisor	Maryam Naraghi
First Assistant Camera	Mohammad Ebrahimian
Gaffer	Koohyar Kalari
Still Photographer	Habib Majidi
Investor	Pasargad Bank
Executive Producer	Negar Eskandarfar