SYNOPSIS

Coming from two countries at odds with each other, Iranian-American Leila (Layla Mohammadi) strives to find balance and embrace her opposing cultures, while boldly challenging the labels society is so quick to project upon her. When her family reunites in New York City for her father's heart transplant, Leila navigates her relationships at arm's length in an effort to keep her "real" life separate from her family life. However, when her secret is unceremoniously revealed, so are the distinct parallels between her life and that of her mother Shireen (Niousha Noor). Punctuated by a bright color palette, snappy comedic relief, and vibrant dance numbers, "The Persian Version" delivers an honest portrayal of a woman who remains unapologetically herself, blended seamlessly into a heartfelt story about family, belonging, and the undeniable influence of pop music.

Winning both the Audience Award and the Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award in the U.S. Dramatic Competition at this year's Sundance Film Festival, writer-director-producer Maryam Keshavarz delivers a universal and timely story of the Iranian and the Iranian-American experience.

Writer-Director's Statement

With "The Persian Version" I wanted to make a film filled with joy. I grew up as the only girl with seven brothers in a NY brownstone with one bathroom. I have an incredible jump shot and probably could escape any pile of sumo wrestlers. I'm well acquainted with the male being, at any age, and for years my running joke was I'm gay because I have seven brothers. But then, when I got knocked up with the first guy I slept with after my divorce from my wife, I was regrettably banned from that lovely joke.

As a kid traveling to Iran for summer breaks during the Iran-Iraq war, I was struck at how my family maintained a sense of joy in such difficult times. Entering a party inside a home in Shiraz, meant ripping off the hijab and going right into a dance move. Most Persians can attest to this. This need for joy and connection. And as a kid in New York City, while my parents struggled financially during the dangerous crack years of the 1980s, gatherings at our home with our giant family and our extended Persian immigrant community were equally filled with joy.

As an Iranian-American, I was immersed in two powerful and conflicting identities... in two worlds. The Great Satan of America on one side and the Axis of Evil of Iran on the other. And I wanted to infuse comedy in the sometimes tragic story. From a 1960s rural Iranian village, to 1980s New York and the 2000s in New Jersey, "The Persian Version" traverses settings and generations in its explorations of identity and of home. "The Persian Version" is a largely autobiographical film centering on three generations of Iranian women.

Becoming a filmmaker was a sharp turn for me. I was on a path to academia, packing a couple of degrees and on my way to a PhD, when 9/11 happened. That's when I realized the immediacy and impact of storytelling and narrative. I embraced the power of storytelling and of popular culture as the vehicle to transform people's understanding of one another. I abandoned academia and took up the camera. My first feature film, "Circumstance," about youth underground culture and the sexual desire between two girls in Iran, won the Audience Award at Sundance but also got me banned from ever returning to the Islamic Republic.

When Trump took office, I felt a seismic shift, similar to the moment of 9/11. Trump really fanned the flames of the anti- Muslim sentiment. When the Muslim Ban first took effect, my family was directly affected. So I started writing "The Persian Version" as a mental refuge, a counterpoint to all the hateful political rhetoric happening. I was writing something personal and intimate. I had never written comedy, but I wanted the spirit of comedy to draw in the audience – perhaps because I desperately needed to laugh. Because as an Iranian-American immigrant of Muslim background, I really started to feel afraid. And so I became attracted to comedy in an urgent way. We Muslims, we immigrants, are funny and self-ironic; we are filled with vulnerabilities and contradictions. America needs a humorous and humane view of Muslims. And for viewers within the Muslim and Middle Eastern communities, it's a truthful rendition of who we are. Second generation

immigrants- some religious, most not, some queer, other not - mostly all still struggling on some level with the identity that had been foisted on us in the post 9/11 world.

The story of "The Persian Version" is also a universal one – of mother and daughter, of families and secrets, of searching for home and finding one's power. As I reflected on my life in my immigrant family, I started to see a parallel between my mother and I. My mother was someone who as an immigrant had decided to rewrite her own story. She came to a new country and with that had the opportunity to reinvent herself and create the narrative she wanted. She was a writer and creator in her own right. And she, like me, was fighting to write a more authentic narrative. I thought about how my nascent identity rested on old stories my mother told me about why we came to America and then how that identity came into question when my grandmother revealed the big family secret.

In telling a story so personal, I wanted a film that was not only about my experience as an Iranian-American but also the Iranian experience of my mother and grandmother and the continuum of the female experience. I wanted to tell a story of the resilience of women. Across decades and continents, the women in this story are powerful and also punished for being selfish for wanting to pursue their own dreams outside of societal expectations. That is the case for the mother wanting to continue her schooling in Iran, and for Leila wanting to live a truthful life around her sexuality. The rebelliousness is what unites mother and daughter. And ultimately they each find an unusual path to their authentic self.

Pop music was a big part of both my worlds. I smuggled the American pop music of Cyndi Lauper and Prince into Iran, and eagerly listened to the Iranian pop music of Googoosh on cassettes in the USA. Music is a huge element of all of my films, and I wanted to end this film with an ode - a synthesis of eastern and western pop music. The last song in the film, "Girls Just Want To Have Fun," is sung by Niousha Noor, who plays the mother Shireen. Our film's composer, Grammy nominated Iranian-American indie-rock star Rostam Batmangalij, arranged the instrumentation with a Persian flare and with some lines translated into Farsi. The reimagining of GJWHF and the entire sweeping score embody the east-meets-west themes of my film.

As a kid, I always longed to see the great Iranian-American immigrant film. The Italians had "The Godfather" and "Moonstruck," the Asian community got "Joy Luck Club" and "Wedding Banquet," South Asians have "The Namesake," even Greek Americans got "My Big Fat Greek Wedding." As a filmmaker, that feeling grew for years and manifested into "The Persian Version." As I was writing the screenplay, I was inspired by the intimacy and bravery of Lulu Wang's "The Farewell" and the epic mediation on Pawlikowski's parent's relationship in "Cold War." I made the film I always longed to see - one that bridges my Iranian and American worlds. My mother's story and my story. I hope "The Persian Version" captures the joy and resilience of this immigrant family, and resonates with other immigrant audiences and anyone who has ever felt like an outsider in their world or in their own family.

Women Lead Revolution

I have been in awe of the incredible bravery of the women and girls of Iran. Their fight against gender apartheid has been in motion for decades. They have fought on every level. In Iran, women's bodies served as reluctant symbols of a theocratic regime. The state's ongoing efforts to police and control women's bodies have now been met with fierce protest.

Principal photography for THE PERSIAN VERSION wrapped a few weeks before the uprising began. When I wrote this film, I had no idea how timely the themes of women's resilience would be. I hope THE PERSIAN VERSION can add to the conversation. I have spent my film career focusing on the resilience of Iranian women. My feature documentary, THE COLOR OF LOVE, centers on three generations discovering love in Shiraz. My controversial narrative feature debut CIRCUMSTANCE centers on two girls in love in Tehran. Now my semi-autobiographical comedy THE PERSIAN VERSION focuses on three generations of Iranian women in America and inside Iran.

I have made films in Iran and been arrested. I have been at feminist protests that ended in police brutality inside Iran. And after the last feature film I made in Iran, I was banned from returning. So I know first hand the risk these women take. I celebrate them. I am in awe of them. I fear for them. I support them.

Through all their struggles of the last 40 years, women in Iran have accomplished so much. Despite the state's attempt to oppress them, women make up more than 50% of university students. They are heavily represented in every field from medicine to the arts. And now, this youngest generation has pushed further and risked more to demand their freedom and to maintain their humanity and joy.

Kamand, who plays the young Shirin (the mother), attended the premiere at Sundance. She and her mother traveled to Park City from Tehran. She's 14 years old, like my mother was, and this was her first time in the USA. This is her first film. I am in awe of her talent and her bravery.

I am thrilled that the world is acknowledging and amplifying the voices of Iranian women. I hope they shape the future they want for themselves. From women in America battling to keep their right to choice to the women in Iran burning their hijabs—the women's struggle is a global one.

WOMEN. LIFE. FREEDOM.

CAST

LAYLA MOHAMMADI as LEILA NIOUSHA NOOR as SHIRIN KAMAND SHAFIEISABET as YOUNG SHIRIN **BIJAN DANESHMAND as ALI REZA BELLA WARDA as MAMANJOON** CHIARA STELLA as YOUNG LEILA TOM BYRNE as MAXIMILLIAN SHERVIN ALENABI as YOUNG ALI REZA **ARTY FROUSHAN as MAJID SAMUEL TEHRANI as SHIVAZ JERRY HABIBI as ABBAS REZA DIAKO as HAMID ANDREW MALIK as EMAN** PARMIDA VAND as NURSE ROYA **ASH GOLDEH as BABAJOON**

FILMMAKERS

Written and Directed by Maryam Keshavarz

Produced by Anne Carey, Ben Howe, Luca Borghese

> Produced By Maryam Keshavarz

Produced By Corey Neal, Peter Block

Executive Producer Nyla Hazratjee

Executive Producer Amy Nauiokas

Director of Photography André Jäger

Edited By Abolfazl Talooni Joanne Yarrow, A.C.E.

> Production Designer Firat Yünlüel

Costume Designer Burcu Yamak

Music by Rostam Batmanglij

Music Supervisor Linda Cohen

First Assistant Director Ogulcan Koyler **Production Sound Javier Farina**

Re-recording Mixer Mathew Waters CAS

Colorist Phillip Orgassa

Choreographer Mertcan Agirtas

Casting By Lindsey Weissmueller

ABOUT THE CREW

MARYAM KESHAVARZ (MARAKESH FILMS) | WRITER, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER

MARYAM KESHAVARZ is an Iranian-American writer, director, and producer. Maryam was born in New York City but spent most summers, and some of her school years, in Shiraz, Iran. This binational childhood naturally made her a translator of cultures, two cultures often at odds with each other. Maryam initially was pursuing a PhD in Near Eastern Studies focusing on Iran and Gender Studies but 9/11 propelled her to enter the media arena to try and change the narrative.

While an MFA student at NYU Tisch School of the Arts, her first short film THE DAY I DIED, an adolescent love triangle between a brother, a sister and her best friend, won a dozen awards including the Gold Teddy at the Berlinale.

Maryam's award-winning feature documentary THE COLOR OF LOVE, an exploration of how love has changed in Iran, garnered multiple accolades such as the IDA's David Volper Best Student Documentary Award and Full Frame's Spectrum Award and has been broadcast internationally.

Maryam's first narrative feature fiction film, CIRCUMSTANCE, premiered to overwhelming critical acclaim at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival. The film won the coveted Sundance Audience Award and Maryam was named to Deadline.com's 2011 Directors to Watch. CIRCUMSTANCE has won over a dozen international awards including Best First Film at the Rome Film Festival and the Audience & Best Actress Awards at Outfest. The Independent Spirit Award nominated film was described by the New York Times as "Swirling and sensuous," by the Wall Street Journal as "Supremely cinematic," and by the Hollywood Reporter as "Amazingly accomplished." The film was released in the US by Participant Media & Roadside Attractions and went on to be released theatrically in over a dozen countries in 2012. The film also was a huge sensation in Iran where it was the top black market DVD, and also caused Maryam to be banned from Iran.

Maryam's sophomore feature VIPER CLUB starring Academy Award Winner Susan Sarandon and Golden Globe Winner Edie Falco had its world premiere at Toronto International Film Festival 2018 and was released theatrically by Roadside Attractions. THE PERSIAN VERSION, a semi-autobiographical epic dramedy of migration, family, and the secrets we keep, traverses decades and toggles between the United States and Iran, is Maryam's third feature. THE PERSIAN VERSION premiered in Main Competition at the Sundance Film Festival 2023, where it won the U.S. Dramatic Competition Audience Award and The Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award. Keshavarz is the first director in Sundance history to win the Audience Award twice.

For her fourth narrative feature, Maryam is in late development on THE LAST HAREM, a gender bending genre defying historical dramedy set in the early years of 19th century Persian Qajar King. When the young queer king falls in love with a cross dressing musician – the rebellious couple will challenge the conservative international forces that surround them and try to change the very fabric of Persian society. THE LAST HAREM has garnered several high profile awards for development including the Hearst Screenwriters Grant, the San Francisco Film Society/ KRF Screenwriting Award, the prestigious Creative Capital Fund, and invitation to the Yaddo Writers Residency.

Maryam has directed episodic television as well as selling pilot scripts to BBC America, FX, and CBS Studios and is in development on several new original series including a transnational dramedy entitled TWO LIVES about two lovers who almost fall in love, if only they would meet.

Maryam's production company, MaraKesh Films, focuses on amplifying women & BIPOC voices and recently produced the award winning film ROSA that was funded by Tribeca/Chanel Through Her Lens and aired on HBOMax, where it was a top trending film in its week of release. That film is presently being developed as a series.

Maryam has taught at NYU Grad Film, lead writers lab for the Black List/ Women in Film, been a mentor for Film Independent's Project Involve, and held numerous filmmaking workshops at universities across the US. Maryam is an active member of the Writers Guild of America and Directors Guild of America, leading talk backs with fellow filmmakers and taking part in numerous panels advocating diversity in the industry.

Maryam holds an MFA from NYU Tisch School in the Arts, an MA from University of Michigan in Near Eastern Studies, and a BA in Women's Studies and Comparative Literature from Northwestern University. She is also an alumna of the Sundance Writers and Directors Lab.

ANNE CAREY | PRODUCER (ARCHER GRAY)

Anne Carey is President of Production and a Partner at Archer Gray.

In addition to THE PERSIAN VERSION, current producing work includes DEAD RINGERS, the drama series for Amazon, written by Alice Birch, starring Rachel Weisz; Marielle Heller's latest film NIGHTBITCH, starring Amy Adams for Searchlight and Annapurna; and the forthcoming THE YOUNG WIFE written and directed by Tayarisha Poe and starring Kiersey Clemons and Leon Bridges.

Carey's previous films include LOST GIRLS directed by Liz Garbus and written by Michael Werwie, starring Amy Ryan; CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE ME?, directed by Marielle Heller, written by Nicole Holofcener and Jeff Whitty and starring Melissa McCarthy and Richard E. Grant with BAFTA nominations and Academy Award nominations across the board; Academy Award-nominated 20th CENTURY WOMEN written and directed by Mike Mills, starring Annette Bening; Marielle Heller's Independent Spirit Award winner THE DIARY OF A TEENAGE GIRL, starring Kristen Wiig and Alexander Skarsgard; and MR HOLMES, directed by Bill Condon, starring Ian McKellen and Laura Linney.

BEN HOWE AND LUCA BORGHESE (AGX) | PRODUCERS

AgX is a New York based production company founded by Ben Howe and Luca Borghese concentrating on feature narrative and documentary work. AgX films have screened at top festivals such as Sundance, the Berlinale, SXSW, Cannes Directors' Fortnight, Locarno and the Tribeca Film Festival, and have been distributed theatrically both internationally and domestically by Neon, IFC Films, Oscilloscope Laboratories, and Strand Releasing, among others.

Their combined producing credits include DIANE (Kent Jones), MONSTERS AND MEN (Reinaldo Marcus Green), MINYAN (Eric Steel), GOLDIE (Sam de Jong), QUITTERS (Noah Pritzker), TEN THOUSAND SAINTS (Pulcini/Berman), GABRIEL (Lou Howe), TEENAGE (Matt Wolf), RETURN (Liza Johnson), THE EXPLODING GIRL (Bradley Rust Gray), TREELESS MOUNTAIN (So Yong Kim), and WILD COMBINATION: A PORTRAIT OF ARTHUR RUSSELL (Matt Wolf).

Upcoming projects include MABEL (Nicholas Ma), and LOVE ME with Kristen Stewart and Stephen Yeun (The Zucheros).

PETER BLOCK AND CORY NEAL (A BIGGER BOAT) | PRODUCERS

A Bigger Boat (ABB) is a Los Angeles based Production and Consulting Company run by founder Peter Block and partner Cory Neal. The company's most recent release, SUMMERING, premiered at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival and was released by Bleecker Street in August 2022 and is being distributed internationally by Sony Pictures Stage 6 Films. ABB is currently in post-production on the feature I'LL BE RIGHT THERE for Universal Pictures International, starring Edie Falco, Bradley Whitford, Michael Rappaport, Jeannie Berlin, and Michael Beach. A Bigger Boat's first theatrical production, FROZEN (the one with real wolves), was an official selection of the Sundance Film Festival, and the company previously acquired and released the acclaimed THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ALICE CREED. Recent ABB productions include the cult hit WE NEED TO DO SOMETHING (IFC Films), THE SHED (Shudder Original), the thrillers HOUSE AT THE END OF THE STREET (Jennifer Lawrence), John Carpenter's THE WARD (Amber Heard, Jared Harris), five installments of the SAW franchise, and the NBC television series FEAR ITSELF, among others.

ABB has a number of projects in various stages of production, including the thriller THE WRECKAGE, to be directed by Patrick Lussier; an English-language remake of the Hitchcock-ian thriller, SLEEP TIGHT, currently casting; a survival picture DEPRIVATION, to be directed Roxanne Benjamin in Summer 2023 in the Dominican Republic, in association with Morena Films; and a noir-thriller based on the Janet Fitch story, THE METHOD, set to star Kathleen Turner. On the Television side, he is currently working on an adaptation of the Danish thriller novel HEX, for TNT. With the Pilot being written by Gary Dauberman (IT, ANNABELLE), and an adaptation of a Stephen King short story with writer David Slack (MACGYVER).

Peter has extensive experience in all facets of the entertainment industry, having overseen aspects of film production and acquisitions, distribution, and marketing for theatrical, television and home entertainment distribution, deal negotiation and structure for all aspects of independent film company and television network operations, and is often engaged for both creative and business input.

Peter is a member of both the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences and the Television Academy, frequent lecturer at industry events, Peter also was a recent artist-in-residence at the UNC School Of The Arts, teaching classes in the Masters and Undergraduate programs as well as evaluating pitches, scripts and thesis films. Additionally, Peter's consulting clients include multinational entertainment companies, consulting firms, production companies and studios for which Peter's services are utilized for corporate operations and business strategy, distribution & marketing campaigns, film evaluation, as well as extensive script development and film editing.

In addition to his producing duties, from 2010-2014 Peter was also the President and General Manager of the cable TV channel FEARnet, overseeing the channel's launch as well as all operations and programming initiatives. Under Peter's leadership, FEARNET, which was sold in 2014 to Comcast Entertainment, and absorbed into the Syfy, Chiller and USA channels, boasted the #1 movie FVOD service, the #1 genre Website, and additionally reached over 25 Million households with its varied programming of over 300 movies annually, including nearly \$1 Billion in Theatrical Box Office Television and Broadcast Premieres as well as its branded Twisted Comedy block of thriller-

comedy television series featuring off-beat favorites such as the UK's PSYCHOVILLE, the Canadian TODD & THE BOOK OF PURE EVIL, and FEARnet's own Original series HOLLISTON, which ran for two seasons.

For over a dozen years Peter headed up various departments at Lionsgate, most noticeably Co-Productions and Acquisitions, and Domestic Television Distribution which he structured and serviced the company's output deals with HBO and Showtime, and both new and deep catalogue Basic Cable arrangements, as well as its initial forays into SVOD distribution, and the creation of EpiX. He has overseen all forms of Distribution for Lionsgate (including home entertainment, television, VOD and independent theatrical), as well as structured many of the company's corporate and production initiatives. Under his supervision, Lionsgate acquired distribution rights to over 500 films through pre-buys, negative pick-ups and co-productions both at script stage and via festival/market screenings. Such films included the box office sensations CRASH, OPEN WATER, FAHRENHEIT 9/11, THE COOLER, the art-house hits such as LANTANA and SECRETARY. His focus on genre pictures resulted in the Company's foray into the theatrical release of horror and thriller pictures through the acquisition of CABIN FEVER, and HOUSE OF 1000 CORPSES. He was responsible for acquiring numerous films from international filmmakers which introduced them to the U.S. audience including Peter Jackson's DEAD ALIVE, Guillermo del Toro's CRONOS, Takashi Shimizu's JU-ON: THE GRUDGE, HIGH TENSION from Alex Aja, and UNDEAD from Australia's Spierig brothers.

Peter is a graduate of Duke University, where he is active in the new Performing Arts Center, and holds graduate degrees from UCLA and USC.

NYLA HAZRATJEE | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Dr. Nyla Hazratjee, is one of the first hijabi American-Muslim filmmakers in the nation. She is doctor by day, and filmmaker and writer by night. As a nationally syndicated producer, host and model in a previous life in Pakistan, a socialite and philanthropist in her current one in Florida, she has cultivated a repertoire of experiences to draw from as the founder of Urban Olive Entertainment, an independent woman-centric creative agency specializing in the production and promotion of local, regional, and national MENA, Muslim, and Southeast Asian voices and stories.

AMY NAUIOKAS | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER (ARCHER GRAY)

Amy Nauiokas is the founder and chair of Archer Gray, a media company devoted to creating quality content, building businesses and re-imagining brands. Her work is built on the belief that powerful storytelling will inspire meaningful dialogue, shed light on critical issues, and shift cultural tides.

Equally passionate about forging a more innovative, equitable, and diverse financial system, Amy is also founder and co-CIO of Anthemis, the leading mission-driven financial services investment platform. Amy and Anthemis invest in best-in- class, high-growth companies that drive change in the financial system.

Before founding Anthemis and Archer Gray, Amy was CEO and Managing Director of Barclays Stockbrokers and led the global e-commerce business at Barclays Capital.

Above all and across many industries, Amy is a catalyst for systems change — deploying financial, human, and intellectual capital to create a more vibrant, inclusive, and just society. ABOLFAZL TALOONI | EDITOR

Abolfazl Talooni is a film editor based in the UK. He is named one of "The Next Generation of Film Awards Contenders" by Screen Daily. Abolfazl is currently editing FIFTEEN-LOVE for Amazon Prime Video. Other notable projects include Eva Riley's BIFA-winning PERFECT 10, two episodes of THE RISING for Sky Studios, and Cannes 2015 Palme d'Or Nominee PATRIOT. Abolfazl is an alumnus of the National Film and TV School NFTS and a member of British Film Editors, BFE.

JOANNE YARROW | EDITOR

JoAnne Yarrow is a Film and TV Editor with twenty years of industry experience. She began her editing career under the mentorship of Academy Award-winning writer/director John Ridley for the series AMERICAN CRIME (ABC), which was nominated for seventeen Emmys and five Golden Globes. JoAnne went on to work on the critically acclaimed series QUEEN SUGAR (OWN), Apple TV+ limited series FIVE DAYS AT MEMORIAL, and ONLY MURDERS IN THE BUILDING (Hulu). JoAnne earned an HPA Editing nomination for her work on VIDA (Starz) and a Primetime Emmy nomination for Outstanding Single-Camera Picture Editing for a Comedy Series for her work in ONLY MURDERS IN THE BUILDING. She made the return to features with the film SHIRLEY (Netflix/Participant) starring Regina King, coming out in 2023. JoAnne is a member of American Cinema Editors and the Television Academy.

ROSTAM BATMANGALIJ | COMPOSER

Rostam Batmanglij is a Grammy-winning producer, composer, and songwriter. He is the producer of 9 full-length albums and over a hundred songs.

His parents left Iran after the revolution in 1979. Batmanglij was born in Washington, DC in 1983. He studied classical music at Columbia University, where he co-founded Vampire Weekend in 2006. He produced their first three albums, the first of which went platinum, it was also the first album of his career as a producer. The next two Vampire Weekend albums he produced, Contra and Modern Vampires of the City, debuted at number one on the Billboard Charts, the latter won he and the band a Grammy for best Alternative Album in 2014.

In 2016 he announced he would leave the band to focus on outside production and songwriting. That year his production work appeared on Frank Ocean's Blonde and Solange's A Seat at the Table. Two of the most critically acclaimed albums of the decade. That same year his collaborative album with Hamilton Leithauser was bestowed the distinction of Best New Music by Pitchfork. Songs from that album appeared in places as diverse as the ad campaign for Apple's iPhone and Netflix's series Thirteen Reasons Why.

In 2017 he released his debut album Half-Light, Rolling Stone gave the album 4-stars, describing it as "fully-lit." In 2018 he was described as "one of the great pop and indie-rock producers of his generation" by Stereogum.

2019 saw Batmanglij collaborate with Claire Cottrill across the entirety of her debut album as Clairo. That album, Immunity, solidified Ms Cottrill as one of the brightest new talents in music. The song, "Sofia", from Immunity was recently certified double platinum by the RIAA.

2019 also saw the return of Haim, with the release of their song "Summer Girl". Batmanglij wrote a saxophone line for the song, which he also co-wrote and co-produced. The sax line, played by Henry Solomon, signified a new direction for the band. The video for the song was directed by Paul Thomas Anderson. Solomon later joined the band as a touring musician. The album Women in Music p.III from which "Summer Girl" was the first single, saw the band reach new heights, including selling out headline shows at Madison Square Garden and the Hollywood Bowl, as well as a nomination for Album of the Year at the 2022 Grammy Awards. The nomination was also shared by Batmanglij who served as producer across every song on the project.

2023's The Persian Version, marks a return to film scoring for Batmanglij, who has worked on short films, features, and television series throughout his career.

"Maryam's film spoke to me on a deep level as an Iranian-American. I don't think anyone has told a story that's so specific to the experience of being Iranian in America. When Maryam asked me to score the film I couldn't refuse. It felt important to clear my schedule and dive in head first," says Batmanglij. The results are a score that bridges east and west, marrying western classical with ancient Iranian music. It culminates in a world-pop reinterpretation of Cindi Lauper's "Girls Just Want to Have Fun". "Our version interweaves the New Wave groove of Cindi Lauper's version with ancient Persian instruments and melodies and rhythms. It's at the intersection of centuries-old Iranian traditions and 80s pop euphoria."

LINDSEY WEISSMUELLER | CASTING DIRECTOR

Lindsey Weissmueller has been working as a casting director on feature films and television series for over 15 years. You can see Lindsey's work in the Sony Pictures feature film, MISSING, currently in theaters internationally. Also coming this year: Netflix's comedy feature PLAYERS (starring Gina Rodriguez, Damon Wayans Jr., Tom Ellis), A24's Larry Charles musical comedy F*#%ING IDENTICAL TWINS, Hulu's body horror comedy.

Additional recent credits include: Netflix's THE G WORD for Michelle and Barack Obama's Higher Ground, Netflix's Emmy-nominated comedy series SPECIAL, SEARCHING (starring John Cho and Debra Messing) which was a \$1M budget Sundance darling that grossed nearly \$100M worldwide, Amazon Studios' AVA (starring Jessica Chastain, Colin Farrell, Common and John Malkovich), Red Hour's PLUS ONE (starring Maya Erskine and Jack Quaid) which won the Audience Award at Tribeca 2019, Blumhouse's street magic thriller SLEIGHT (Sundance 2016) and IFC Midnight's CARNAGE PARK (Sundance 2016).

Lindsey is deeply passionate about working with actors, drawing out performances that connect them to their characters on a personal level. She's wild about the creatives with whom she regularly collaborates and considers her colleagues highly inspirational friends. She loves her work almost as much as her wonderful husband and three small adorable (crazy) children.

ABOUT THE CAST

LAYLA MOHAMMADI (LEILA)

The Iranian/Italian actress will next be seen recurring in the Paramount+ original drama series LIONESS starring Zoe Saldaña and Nicole Kidman. The series is executive produced by Taylor Sheridan and set to release in 2023.

Mohammadi is known for her portrayal of 'Noriah' in the short film, MY LOVE (2022), as well as CANDACE NICARAGUA in Comedy Central's CURSED FRIENDS (2022) executive produced by Will Arnett. Previously, she appeared in popular series such as THE SEX LIVES OF COLLEGE GIRLS (2021), ICARLY (2021), MAD ABOUT YOU (2019) and THE GOLDBERGS (2019).

NIOUSHA NOOR (SHIRIN)

Niousha Noor is an Iranian-American actress whose extensive resumé includes a wide range of comedy and drama alike. She can currently be seen starring in the Netflix limited series, KALEIDOSCOPE (#1 Show Worldwide). In 2020, she starred in IFC's THE NIGHT, opposite famed Iranian actor Shahab Hosseini. Her performance was widely praised by critics and audiences alike. Other credits include recurring roles on HERE AND NOW (HBO) and STITCHERS (Freeform). Niousha is currently developing her original screenplay, BLUE FLOWER, which she intends to produce and star. Noor currently resides in Los Angeles, CA.

KAMAND SHAFIEISABET (YOUNG SHIRIN)

Born in Iran in 2008, Kamand Shafieisabet is a Freshman in highschool based in Tehran. She makes her acting debut in Maryam Keshevarz's THE PERSIAN VERSION.

BIJAN DANESHMAND (ALI REZA)

Bijan Daneshmand is an Iranian born-English actor and artist based in London, England. Born in Tehran, Iran, sent to England for his schooling at the age of 10. Educated in England at Eastbourne College, Sussex, a graduate of King's College London, and trained for acting at Philippe Gaulier school, Paris. He has an MA Fine Art from Chelsea College of Arts.

Bijan's film acting credits include MUNICH (Steven Spielberg), BODY OF LIES (Ridley Scott), GREEN ZONE (Paul Greengrass), WOMEN WITHOUT MEN (Shirin Neshat), UNDER THE SHADOW (Babak Anvari), and INFIDEL (Cyrus Nowrasteh). Bijan also acted in the Sundance Film Festival of 2016. The hugely popular UNDER THE SHADOW by Babak Anvari premiered in January 2016. His television credits include THE NIGHT MANAGER, HOUSE OF THE DRAGON, DEEP STATE, SPOOKS, THE LOOMING TOWER, TEHRAN, and SUSPICION.

Represented by JWL, London.

BELLA WARDA (MAMANJOON)

Bella Warda—actress, director, and translator—one of the founders of Darvag Theater in 1985 with the dual mission of exploring creative expression in theater arts, and maintaining a vital living connection with the group's Iranian heritage. She performs in English, Farsi and Assyrian and lives in Berkeley, California.

Warda has appeared in feature films RADIO DREAMS (Tiger Award winner in the Rotterdam Film Festival, 2016), LEGAL ALIENS, WALLS OF SAND, and THE VISIT. She has directed NO SUCH COLD THING by Naomi Wallace (with Golden Thread Productions), 444 DAYS by Torange Yaghyazarian (with Golden Thread Productions), THE BEAR by Chekhov (with Darvag Theater Productions), WRITING IN THE DARK by Mohammad Yaghoubi (with Darvag Theater Productions), THE RED AND THE OTHERS by Mohammad Yaghoubi (with Darvag Theater Productions), ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE by Mohammad Yaghoubi (with Darvag Theater Productions) and THE VICTIM by Mario Fratti (Darvag Production). Warda is also known for her theater and translation work.

CHIARA STELLA (YOUNG LEILA)

Chiara Stella is an American actress with Italian/Iranian origins. She is currently 9 years old and lives in Los Angeles, California. Chiara Stella's first movie role comes with THE PERSIAN VERSION as 'Young Leila'. She is dedicated to pursuing an acting career, taking coaching classes along with her academic studies.

TOM BYRNE (MAXIMILLIAN)

Tom Byrne starred in the feature film THE ROAD DANCE. His television credits include DREAMING WHILST BLACK, THE CROWN, A DISCOVERY OF WITCHES, and BLACK MIRROR. Theater performances include the lead in DMITRY, as well as TWELFTH NIGHT / A CHRISTMAS CAROL, ECHO'S END, and KING LEAR. Byrne has had voice over roles in the radio productions JOAN OF ARC: WARRIOR MAIDEN and BROKEN COLOURS.

SHERVIN ALENABI (YOUNG ALI REZA)

Shervin Alenabi is an Iranian born, UK based actor who starred as 'Milad,' a hacker turned dissident, in the Apple TV+ International Emmy Award-winning drama series TEHRAN. Season two debuted globally on May 6, 2022, and the series was subsequently nominated for a 2023 Critics Choice Award in the category of 'Best Foreign Language Series'.

Alenabi previously starred in BAGHDAD IN MY SHADOW, for which he learned to speak Arabic. On behalf of his performance, The Hollywood Reporter called him a "striking young actor", and he was spotlighted as "one to watch" following the film's premiere at the 2019 Locarno Film Festival.

Alenabi currently resides in London.

ARTY FROUSHAN (MAJID)

A graduate of the prestigious LAMDA, Arty currently stars in Tom Stoppard's Olivier Award-winning play LEOPOLDSTADT, directed by Patrick Marber, on Broadway, which opened to rave reviews. He previously starred in the West End production as well. Arty was most recently seen in the pivotal recurring role of 'Qarl Correy' in HBO's hit series HOUSE OF THE DRAGON. Previous television credits include a series regular role in the Amazon series CARNIVAL ROW, season 2 of which will be released on February 17, 2023, and recurring roles in the Cinemax series STRIKE BACK and the History Channel series KNIGHTFALL. Previous stage credits include WHITE PEARL at the Royal Court Theatre.

SAMUEL TEHRANI (SHIVAZ)

Samuel Tehrani is an Iranian-Austrian actor. He is notable for his role as 'Arian Mohajerani' in the feature film DINNER FOR EIGHT by Bernhard Ratka, as well as for his roles in short films like PARAGRAPH 140 by Louis Derfert and IN THE DARK by Tobias Vees. Due to his Persian roots, close family ties to the United States, and his residence in Austria, he was raised a trilingual. He's also a multi-instrumentalist, writer, and songwriter.

JERRY HABIBI (ABBAS)

Jerry Habibi was hand selected for his role of 'Abbas' in THE PERSIAN VERSION and is the only Iranian-American male in the cast. Jerry is a native speaking Farsi/English performer of American nationality and Iranian origin. Born to two immigrant parents from Iran, he is a first generation Iranian-American. Jerry has trained and studied various acting techniques from Stanislavski, Shurtleff, Chekhov, and more. He has undergone various forms of movement and dance training with a particular focus in Persian dance. He is passionate about continuously diversifying his training and has converted his expertise in music production to his voiceover work and ADR workshops. He was acquired as a client by Luber Roklin Entertainment and signed to Tim Taylor in January 2023.

REZA DIAKO (HAMID)

Reza Diako is a bilingual actor (English/ Persian) born in Switzerland, of Austrian nationality and of Iranian origin, residing in London over the last 15 years. He is a graduate of acting from Mountview conservatoire drama school in London. He has also trained at Stella Adler's Studios, Ivana Chubbuck Studio, and HB Studio in the states. Diako has also further trained in the Yat Malmgren Technique at Giles Foreman Centre, Method Acting at the London School of Method, and the Meisner at the Impulse Company. Diako has a background in psychology and Jungian psychodynamic development which he frequently applies to his acting work.

Diako is currently working on the film adaptation of READING LOLITA IN TEHRAN directed by Eran Riklis and starred in the role of 'Haadee' in GUY RITCHIE'S THE COVENANT.

Diako can be seen in HBO Max and Sky Atlantic's I HATE SUZIE TOO in the role of 'Zak' and on the Netflix drama THE DIPLOMAT in the role of 'Basir'. He can also be seen in season one and two of Apple TV's Original International Emmy Award winning drama, TEHRAN, in the regular role of

'Shahin', and as 'Henri' in ITV's new series, A SPY AMONG FRIENDS. Diako also features in BBC series AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS and in the feature film THE SON directed by Florian Zeller.

ANDREW MALIK (EMAN)

Andrew Malik is a young Persian Assyrian/English actor based in London. Starting his career in film in 2016, he was notably cast as the lead ('Joe') in the BBC short £5 ENTRY. THE PERSIAN VERSION is Andrew's first feature film. He's very much looking forward to delving into more film and TV roles in the future.

PARMIDA VAND (NURSE ROYA)

Iranian-Canadian Parmida Vand is a rising talent in film and music. After beginning her career performing in theatres across Canada (WINTER OF '88, dir. Mohammad Yaghoubi; RUMI'S FABLES, dir. Sue Miner), Parmida shifted her focus to acting on screen, appearing in TV series, short films. As a musician, Parmida's music project Päter has gained attention internationally, collecting over a million streams on Spotify alone. Parmida was born on the island of Qeshm in Iran and immigrated to Canada at the age of 7.

ASH GOLDEH (BABAJOON)

Ash Goldeh was born and raised in the suburbs of Paris, to Iranian parents. An alumnus of the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute (NYC), Ash Goldeh began his career performing in various Off-Broadway shows, most notably in WAITING FOR GODOT, directed by Mathilde Schennen at the Kraine Theatre. Ash then toured across France with Ahmed Madani's social drama ILLUMINATION(S).

In 2015, he made his TV debut in the internationally acclaimed spy series THE BUREAU, which was soon followed by an appearance in Katell Quillévéré's 2016 film HEAL THE LIVING, selected for Venice and TIFF.

Ash's credits also include guest roles on Season 8 of HOMELAND on Showtime, NO MAN'S LAND on Hulu, and a recurring role in the Apple TV+ hit series TEHRAN (season 1).

This year, he appeared alongside Jake Gyllenhaal in GUY RITCHIE'S THE COVENANT, and he recently wrapped Guy Nattiv's upcoming film JUDO, in which he plays the male lead.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION & MEDIA COMPANIES

ARCHER GRAY

Archer Gray is a modern media company devoted to creating quality content, building businesses, and reimagining brands. From development to production of film, television and live events to strategic brand advisory and venture building, Archer Gray brings innovative ideas and communities together to amplify authentic voices and catalyze social change. Founded in 2010 by Amy Nauiokas and led by Nauiokas and Vinay Singh, the company comprises a diverse team that has extensive experience in the media industry. The company has produced award-winning film, television, and theatrical entertainment including 2020's LOST GIRLS; the 2018 Oscar and Golden Globe-nominee CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE ME?, 2017 Oscar and Golden Globe-nominee 20TH CENTURY WOMEN, 2015 Independent Spirit Award-winner THE DIARY OF A TEENAGE GIRL, and the eight-time Tony award-winning Broadway musical ONCE. and the Sundance award-winning film, THE PERSIAN VERSION.

THE PERSIAN VERSION

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LOGO

MARAKES

H FILMS

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"an A BIGGER BOAT production

in association with CITY BOY HANDS "

THE PERSIAN VERSION

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Produced By ANNE CAREY BEN HOWE LUCA BORGHESE

Produced By MARYAM KESHAVARZ

Produced By CORY NEAL PETER BLOCK

Executive Producer NYLA HAZRATJEE

Executive Producer AMY NAUIOKAS

Director of Photography ANDRÉ JÄGER

Edited By ABOLFAZL TALOONI JOANNE YARROW, A.C.E.

Production Designer FIRAT YÜNLÜEL

Costume Designer BURCU YAMAK

Music by ROSTAM BATMANGLIJ

Music Supervisor LINDA COHEN

First Assistant Director OGULCAN KOYLER

Production Sound JAVIER FARINA

Re-recording Mixer MATHEW WATERS CAS

Colorist PHILLIP ORGASSA

Choreographer MERTCAN AGIRTAS

Casting By LINDSEY WEISSMUELLER

LAYLA MOHAMMADI

NIOUSHA NOOR

KAMAND

SHAFIEISABET BIJAN

DANESHMAND BELLA

WARDA

CHIARA STELLA

TOM BYRNE

SHERVIN

ALENABI ARTY

FROUSHAN

SAMUEL TEHRANI

JERRY HABIBI

PARSA KAFFASH

REZA DIAKO

ANDREW MALIK

MIA FOO

BOSHRA DASTOURNEZHAD

PARMIDA VAND

SACHLI GHOLAMALIZAD

ASH GOLDEH

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Young Ali Reza SHERVIN ALENABI

Majid ARTY FROUSHAN

Shivaz SAMUEL TEHRANI

Abbas JERRY HABIBI

Vahid PARSA KAFFASH

Hamid REZA DIAKO

Eman Zaman ANDREW MALIK

Elena MIA FOO

Soussan BOSHRA DASTOURNEZHAD

Nurse Roya PARMIDA VAND

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BAYRAM ZORLUOGLU

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BENGISU AKKAYNAK

BUSE GOKDEN

EZGI YUCEL

KEMAL ALP ERMIS

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Additional Sound SAMAR ATTA ALZATE

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Additional Voices DANIEL KESHAVARZ

KEVIN KESHAVARZ

Score Recordist JOEY MESSINA-DOERNING

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Yayli Tambur, Electric Saz AMIR YAGHMAI

Piano TOMMY KING

Dombak MEHRDAD ARABI

Drums ANDREW TACHINE

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JOEY MESSINA-DOERNING

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TOLGA KARACELIK

HELYA SALARVAND

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DR. REZA KESHAVARZ

KARIM ARZADI

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NAYER MOUSAVI

NICHOLAS BRUCKMAN

KONSTANTINOS KONTOVRAKIS

REZA BAHAR

IRA SACHS

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OLIVER WHEELER

AZAD JAFARIAN

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