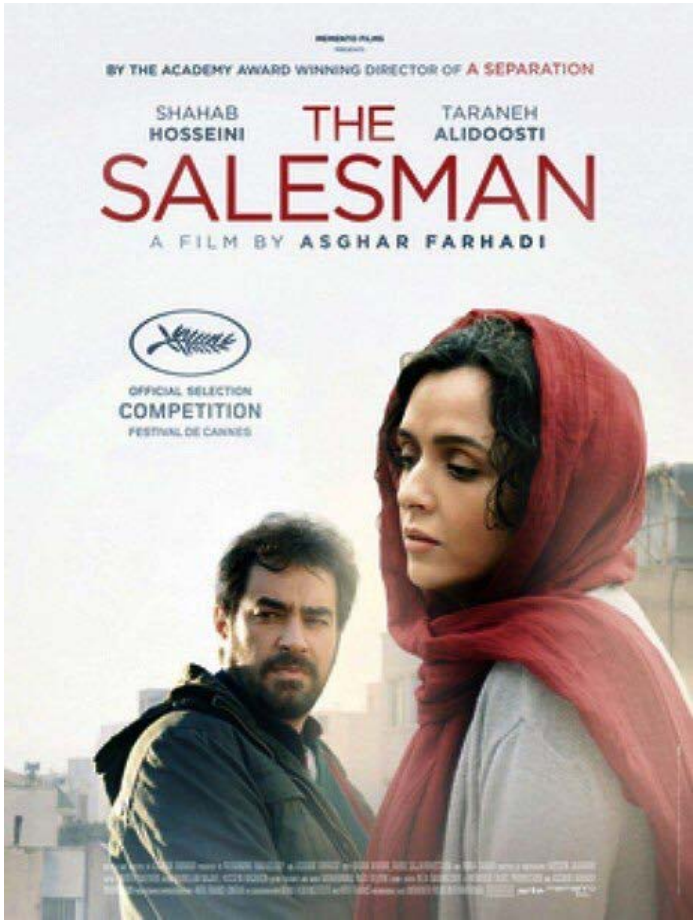
Directed, produced and written by Asghar Farhadi
Original Music by Sattar Oraki
Cinematography by Hossein Jafarian
Film Editing by Hayedeh Safiyari

The film won Best Foreign Language Film of the Year (Iran) at the 2017 Academy Awards and won Best Actor and Best Screenplay and was nominated for the Palme d'Or at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival.

Shahab Hosseini...Emad
Taraneh Alidoosti...Rana
Babak Karimi...Babak
Farid Sajadhosseini...The Man
Mina Sadati...Sanam
Maral Bani Adam...Kati
Mehdi Koushki...Siavash
Emad Emami...Ali
Kian Rostami...reza
Alireza Rofougaran...Mr. Alimoradi
Shirin Aghakashi...Esmat
Mojtaba Pirzadeh...Majid
Sahra Asadollahi...Mojgan
Ehteram Boroumand...Mrs. Shahnazari
Sam Valipour...Sadra

ASGHAR FARHADI (b. 1972, Isfahan, Iran) has written 19 films and directed nine. Farhadi has received two Oscars for Best Foreign Language Film for his films *A Separation* (2011) *and The Salesman* (2016), making him one of the few directors worldwide who have won the category twice. He also received the Cannes Film Festival Award for Best Screenplay for his film *The Salesman*. In 2021, he received the Cannes Film Festival's Grand Prix for his film *A Hero*. In 2012, he was included on the annual Time 100 list of the most



influential people in the world. That same year he also received the Legion of Honour from France. These are the other films he has directed: 2018 *Everybody Knows*, 2013 *The Past*, 2011 *A Separation,* 2009 *About Elly*, 2006 *Fireworks Wednesday*, 2004 *Beautiful City*, and 2003 *Dancing in the Dust.*

HOSSEIN JAFARIAN (b. 1944 in Tehran, Iran) was voted the best cinematographer of the Iranian decade (2001-2011) by over 130 film critics in the 100th issue of the Iranian magazine *Sanaat Cinama* (*Cinema Industry*). In 2018 Mr. Jafarian was invited to join the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in the United States - the first Iranian cinematographer to have been invited. He began his career working for Iranian state-run television where he shot over 40 documentaries and TV shows before retiring early soon after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. His feature film debut was with 1984's *Tatooreh*. But it wasn't until 1992's *Nargess* that he established himself as a leading cinematographer in Iran. Many of his films have gone on to win awards at international film festival, including; Abbas Kiarostami's *Through the Olive Trees* (1994), Jafar Panahi's *Crimson*

Gold (2003) and Asghar Farhadi's *Fireworks Wednesday* (2006) and *About Elly* (2009).

SATTAR ORAKI has 54 film music composer credits, some of which are 2020 *Feminity*, 2012 *Ekbatan,* 2012 *Yek Satr Vagheiat,* 2011 *A Separation*, 2011 *Nadarha,* 2011 *Kooche melli*, 2010 *Whatever God Wants*, 2010 *Empty Paper Bag* (short), 2010 *Nasepas,* 2009 *The Strangers*, 2008 *Loose Rope,* and 2007 *Rock, Paper, Scissors.*

SHAHAB HOSSEINI (February 3, 1974, Tehran, Iran) has 68 acting credits, some of which are: 2021 *Golden Blood*, 2012 *Sayeh Vahshat* (completed), 2012 *The Paternal House*, 2012 *Hiss Dokhtarha Faryad Nemizanand*, 2011 *Final Whistle*, 2011 *Goodbye,* 2011 *Havalie Otoban,* 2011 *A Separation*, 2011 *Barf Rooye Shirvani Dagh,* 2011 *Just an Hour Ago* (short), 2010 *Anahita,* 2010 *Parse Dar Meh*, 2009 *Flags of Kaveh's Castle*, 2009 *About Elly*, 2009 *Superstar,* 2009 *Heartbroken,* 2008 *Niloofar,* 2007 "Zero Degree Turn", 2005 *Salvation at 8:20*, 2005 *Gerdab,* 2004 *A Candle in the Wind,* 2003 *The Fifth Reaction,* 2003 *Zahr-e asal,* 2002 *Adamakha,* and 2002 *Rokhsareh.*

TARANEH ALIDOOSTI (b. January 12, 1984 in Tehran, Iran) is best known internationally for her role in *The Salesman* (2016). Alidoosti has won Best Actress In a Leading Role at the 20th Fajr Film Festival for her performance in *I'm Taraneh, 15* (2002). She is also known for her starring roles in *The Beautiful City* (2003), *Fireworks Wednesday* (2006), *About Elly* (2008), *Shahrzad* (2015–2018). Fluent in German and English, Alidoosti has also translated books by Alice Munro and Nicole Krauss from English to Persian.

Elise Nakhnikian: "Intervieew: Asghar Farhadi on *The Salesman*, Censorship, & More" (Slant, 2017)

Like many great writer-directors, Asghar Farhadi has spent most of his career ringing variations on a theme: In a classic Farhadi setup, fissures within a family or other intimate group are thrown into relief when a trauma or a primal conflict brings out previously hidden aspects of the main characters. Thanks to their fine-grained realism and the intimacy of their settings, his films convey a great deal of information about life in contemporary Iran, particularly among Tehran's educated and artistic elite.

The filmmaker also has a good ear for the way men and women communicate, and a sharp eye for the politics of gender. His latest, *The Salesman*, is set in the world of theater in which Farhadi started out. Rana (Taraneh Alidoosti) and Emad (Shahab Hosseini), a youngish married couple, are starring in their theater group's production of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* when a violent sexual attack shakes Rana's world, propelling the normally sensitive and supportive Emad into a state of macho rigidity.

Farhadi met with me in the Manhattan office of *The Salesman*'s U.S. distributor, Cohen Media Group, to talk about his latest work, how the ambiguity of his films is both an advantage and a disadvantage when dealing with Iran's infamous censors, and why he would rather make films in Iran than anywhere else in the world, despite the difficulties.

Your films provide a humanistic window into life in Iran, partly because the characters are so easy to relate to and partly because of their sheer artfulness and moral complexity. Do you think they help counteract the dominant narrative in countries like ours, that tend to portray Iran as a scary, dangerous place full of religious and political extremists?

When I make my films, I'm not consciously thinking that I want to show a correct image of my people to the world, but automatically this happens, and this satisfies me. The situations that characters are put into in these films are situations that could happen anywhere in the world. The look that I have onto the characters is a look of empathy—even the characters who are at fault. Perhaps this is something that people around the world like, when you can put yourself into

the shoes of others. This is the most important thing to me. When I was working in theater as well, when I was writing plays, I was also seeking ways that the audience could empathize with the characters.

Censorship has been famously difficult for some Iranian directors, most notably Jafar Panahi. In your Q&A after the New York Film Festival press screening for *A Separation*, you talked about how you ensure that your films can be seen in Iran spite of the censors. You said: "One way is, I don't speak loudly in my films. Another way is that I don't force my judgments on the audience." The way you make the audience think for themselves about what is happening is one of the signature features of all of your films, and I've always assumed it was an artistic choice. But are you saying you developed that way of making films in part to avoid being censored?

I believe art in the face of censorship is like water in the face of stone. When you place an obstacle like a stone in the way of water, the water finds its way around it. This doesn't mean agreeing with censorship, of course. But one of the things that censorship does, without wanting to do it—one of the unintended consequences—is that it makes you creative. Censorship in the long run has very bad consequences, and it can kill creativity, but in the short run it could make people creative.

And is one of the ways it has made you creative by inspiring you to make your points more indirectly?

It makes you speak vicariously and indirectly. I don't like to speak directly in cinema anyway. When you speak directly, you're forcing something on the audience. You don't let the audience discover and reach [its own] conclusion.

How does censorship work in Iran, exactly? I understand it's not like there are clear rules you have to follow, but more of a shifting landscape, depending on who you're dealing with?

Censorship has different shapes. There's an official censorship: There's a committee that reads your script and gives you comments. Those people, throughout the years, because they have become familiar with cinema through watching films, they have become more lenient. But there's also an unofficial censorship. When the film is finished and screened, then people who look at everything with a political eye take their magnifying glass and look into the details. They look for the things that might be against them, and they start to make some interpretations of the film that have nothing to do with the film. And this damages the relationship that the ordinary audience has with the film and it manipulates their minds.

Do you have to change your film in response to what they say?

No. I don't change the film.

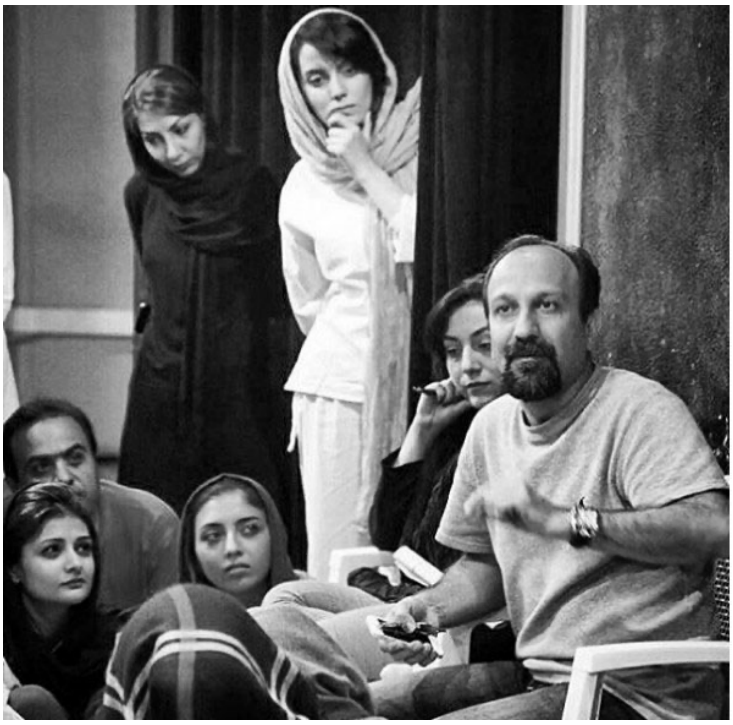
So how does what they say damage the film's relationship with the audience?

For instance, they make it about a specific subject matter when it's actually not about that subject matter. They divert the minds of the audience. When the film *A Separation* was screened, those people who always see things from a political angle started saying that this film is encouraging emigration—leaving Iran. This is very strange to me, because I had a character of a woman who wanted to leave and a character of a man who insisted on staying, and the film was a challenge between the two. I don't think that anyone, by seeing *A Separation*, would be encouraged to leave the country. In fact, the opposite has happened: Many people returned to their parents [in Iran] after seeing the film. But this wrong discussion resulted in very wrong discussions afterward, with people talking about emigration. They don't make me change the film, but they change my audience's relationship to the film.

In this country, as you know, we have legal freedom of expression—at least for now. But even so, it's very difficult to get art films like yours made and seen by the public, mostly because of market pressures that dictate what kinds of films get funded

and distributed and advertised and so on. Would it be easier or harder for you to make films here than in Iran?

Because the films that are made in Iran aren't big production films and they don't need a big budget, it's still very simple to make films there. There are things that are difficult and there are things that are easier compared to the world outside. For instance, I can find the best people that I want there as part of my crew. Despite all the difficulties, I still prefer making films in Iran.



How widely are your films seen in Iran?

Out of my films in Iran, this film has been the most successful. It's still in the last days of its screening in Iran, and it has been the best-selling film in the history of Iranian cinema.

Do you think that's something about this particular film, or do you think people are just getting to know you better as a director? I know your Oscar speech [for *A Separation*] was very widely seen in Iran.

It could be both of these things, but of course there's a large number of people who relate to this kind of cinema. It's a cinema that hasn't just the entertaining purpose, but it gives the audience a chance to challenge themselves.

But you could say that about any of your films. I'm wondering why this one in particular is hitting a chord.

I think my audience has realized now that it has to leave some time to think about the film after they see it. That people talk to each other, that it creates conversation and debate among people, even those that don't agree with the film. This is a big happening for me.

So people are coming to understand what a Farhadi film is?

People have understood my cinematic language. This makes my job both difficult and easy.

Why difficult?

Because now they see the details with such an eye that sometimes they draw conclusions from those details that I didn't intend [smiles].

Are you a fan of Ingmar Bergman? I'm asking because the way you switch between the artists making theater together and the private lives and fraying marriage of two members of the group in *The Salesman* reminded me of Bergman.

I very much like Bergman. I think he's one of the best in the world. Out of my respect for Bergman, I put a poster for *Shame* in one of the scenes of the film. One of the characteristics of Bergman's films is that there's a lot of emphasis on the psychology of people, on people's individualism. And the films have a strong relationship with theater.

Taraneh Alidoosti, who plays Rana, also played main characters in several other films of yours. What is it about her, or your working relationship with her, that works so well for you?

This was my fourth film with Taraneh: *Beautiful City*, *About Elly*, *Fireworks Wednesday*, and this one. She's a very smart actress, and she uses her mind when she's facing a character. She's one of those actors that must understand the character fully. In this film, she had a difficult task because in most of the film, Rana was silent because of the damage that was done to her. The job of Taraneh was to make the character be silent not because she's passive but because she's been damaged.

What film is Emad's class watching—or not watching—in that scene where he falls asleep while teaching a class?

This is a very old film, *The Cow*, that's very much discussed in Iran. It received the best actor award at the Chicago International Film Festival [in 1971]. It's about a character who has a cow and loves the cow so much that when the cow dies the character has a metamorphosis into this cow. It's the gradual change of a person into a cow. It's like Kafka's work.

Did you include it because you wanted to pay tribute to a great Iranian film?

It's that, but it's also that in reality it's part of children's textbooks. And it's also based on a play.

You're so good at capturing the perspective of women in your films. How much of the oppression that women experience do you think comes from seemingly nice guys like Emad, whose male pride makes him blind to the trauma Rana experiences after her attack, and how much from overtly misogynistic or domineering men?

The men in my films, in regular situations, are just normal men. When they're placed in a crisis, all of a sudden their characters change. This is exactly my deliberate choice. I choose male characters that are placed in dilemmas, and they cannot make a decision when they are in these dilemmas. Usually these men are good men who try to be moralistic, but the situations don't allow them to execute their moralism.

So you wouldn't say that the men themselves are oppressing their wives or the other women around them but that they are victims of the situation?

This is just my personal belief. There is nothing scientific about it. I think that men usually have a strong sense of ownership of women, and this is what determines their behavior. Especially this is seen in more traditional societies. Also, men usually think about the past more than women. Women, because of their ability to give birth to children, look to the future more. Women can pass easier.

Can pass?

They can make a shift from the past to the future. But men usually hold onto the past. They want to revise it and go back to it and talk about it. All of my characters have followed this formula. In *A Separation*, the man has his outlook on his father: His gaze is fixed on the past. But the woman is thinking about the future of her daughter.

Thomas Erdrink: "Asgha Farhadi, Iran's Master of the Ordinary, Wins a 2nd Oscar" (*NY Times*, Feb. 27, 2017)

For Iranians, Asghar Farhadi, whose movie "The Salesman" won the Academy Award for best foreign language film on Sunday, is more than just a filmmaker.

In a country where the state-controlled news media generally overlooks the stresses and strains of a normal middle-class existence, Mr. Farhadi — who refused to attend the Oscars ceremony to protest President Trump's targeted travel ban — is one of the few to describe daily life.

"He tells the story of the middle class," said Reza Haeri, a documentary maker. "Mr. Farhadi speaks their language. He focuses on tensions that his audience can also experience in their everyday lives. That is why he has a huge following in Iran."

The award on Sunday was not Mr. Farhadi's first, as he also won best foreign language film in 2012, for "A Separation." That places him in the company of renowned foreign directors like Federico Fellini, Vittorio De Sica and Ingmar Bergman.

Mr. Farhadi and the two stars of "The Salesman" decided not to attend the Oscars on Sunday "out of respect" for their fellow Iranians, the director said in January. In an acceptance speech delivered for him by the Iranian-American entrepreneur and space explorer Anousheh Ansari, Mr. Farhadi said, "Dividing the world into categories of 'us' and 'our enemies' creates fear." He also called the targeted travel ban "inhumane" and called for "empathy."

"The Salesman" won the best foreign film Oscar. Anousheh Ansari, an American-Iranian businesswoman, accepted the award for Asghar Farhadi

For many of the Iranian director's fans, acutely aware that Iran makes headlines outside the country mostly for missile tests or for orchestrated anti-Western rallies, the award was a source of pride.

At the heart of Mr. Farhadi's films are the social struggles that many urban Iranians face daily: divorce, migration, domestic violence and the small but

destructive lies that are needed to maneuver between a modernizing society and restrictive, ideological rules and regulations frozen in time.

"The Salesman," which features two of Iran's most prominent actors, Taraneh Alidoosti and Shahab Hosseini, tells a simple but gripping tale about a couple, both amateur actors, who move into an apartment previously occupied by a single mother who left behind evidence of a mysterious life — perhaps as a prostitute.

In a brilliant interplay with Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman," in which the couple performs as the film unfolds, they find their lives thrown into turmoil after the woman is assaulted while in the shower, in a case of mistaken identity. It is a tale, as A. O. Scott said in his review in The New York Times, "about trust and honor, about violence against women in a patriarchal society, about the woe that is in marriage, but it is also about death, a salesman and the hidden brutality of class."

But it is Mr. Farhadi's eye for detail and respectful storytelling that make him such a powerful champion of millions of Iranians who feel that the state-controlled news media completely ignores the reality of their lives and problems.

"There is simply no comparison between state television and Farhadi," said Saba Motmaen, a 26-year-old administrator at an advertising company. "They leave out all sorts of aspects of our lives, while he makes me feel close to his films. His movies are realistic and believable."

At the same time, Mr. Farhadi is often criticized by Iranian hard-liners, who say that his films paint an unjustifiably dark picture of the Islamic republic and that his work is overrated by Hollywood.

"The Oscars are tainted by politics," said one critic, Hamidreza Ayoubi, a retired staff member of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps who owns a publishing house. "Some of his movies are O.K., but not worthy of prizes. He is part of a postcolonial show, promoting Hollywood culture."

Like his audience, Mr. Farhadi mostly steers clear of politics — dangerous ground in Iran. But his international acclaim is increasingly thrusting him into the role of spokesman for Iranians who are caught between the rigid ideology of the state and Western governments that isolate the country with sanctions — and, now, the Trump administration's travel ban for the citizens of seven predominantly Muslim countries, including Iran.

Mr. Farhadi does so in subtle ways, mastered by those in Iran who want to criticize, but not so harshly as to be silenced by censors.

"President Trump and those who don't like Farhadi inside Iran will be angry with him," Ali Sharif, a 43-year-old salesman, said in an interview in Tehran. "He spoke out against the travel ban, something Trump doesn't like. And he placed a successful Iranian woman on the world stage who lives in America and doesn't wear a scarf. That will make our hard-liners upset."

In a statement given to The Times in January, Mr. Farhadi spoke out against "hard-liners" in both the United States and Iran. Reached on Monday, he was obviously overjoyed at the news of his new Oscar but did not provide any further comment.

Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, a member of President Hassan Rouhani's moderate government, posted a congratulatory message on Twitter, saying that Iranians "have represented culture and civilization for millennia."

And the director's triumph, of course, thrilled his audience at home. "I get happy over anything that makes Iran look good internationally," Ms. Motmaen said. "Farhadi makes us looks like everybody else, like normal."

Geoffrey Macnab: "The Salesman review: Asghar Farhadi's Oscar-winning film makes the domestic feel epic" (*The Independent*, March 15, 2017)

"You fake! You phoney little fake!" Biff Loman screams at his father, the salesman Willy Loman, at a crucial point in Arthur Miller's play, *Death Of A Salesman*. Willy has been having an adulterous affair

and Biff, the son who reveres him, is devastated to learn about it. Their relationship can never be repaired.

It's a surprise to find a classic post-war play by a Jewish-American playwright at the centre of a new Iranian film. Asghar Farhadi's *The Salesman*, which recently won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language feature, is about a school teacher and actor, Emad Etesami (Shahab Hosseini) directing and starring in a production of Miller's *Death Of A Salesman* at a time of unexpected upheaval in his domestic life.

Farhadi is far too sly and subtle a filmmaker to draw the parallels between Emad and Willy Loman in too obvious a fashion. Nonetheless, what gives the film a searing emotional impact is the way it exposes the hidden flaws in its main character.

Emad seems reliable and likeable. In the classroom with his literature students, he has a natural authority. He doesn't patronise them. They respect him and hold him in affection. At rehearsals, there is the same mood of calm. Even when he and his wife Rana (Taraneh Alidoosti) have to flee their damaged apartment after what appears to be an earthquake, he doesn't panic. He is the first to help others. Thanks to a stage colleague, they quickly find a new apartment and life appears to carry on as normal.

One of the points about *The Salesman* is that what starts as a little crack can bring a whole building down. Something about their new apartment bothers Emad and Rana. The previous tenant's possessions are all still there, her shoes and clothes. What they learn about her unsettles them. She had a lot of "visitors", which is a polite way of saying she may have been a prostitute.

In bizarre circumstances, when Emad is briefly out of the apartment and Rana is having a shower, an intruder gets in and assaults her. Emad is full of righteous indignation and determined to track down the aggressor.

The Salesman is structured like a thriller, albeit a low key and downbeat one. Emad is the self-appointed detective, looking for clues about his wife's attacker. He finds car keys, a phone, a truck. The irony is that in the course of his investigations, it's his own character flaws which emerge. He is relentless and vindictive. His manner changes.

Whether at home or in the classroom or at the theatre, he now always seems to be on edge, his brow furrowed. He won't go to the police. He is not sure whether the neighbours are allies or antagonists. He doesn't know whether he is taking the assault too seriously or not seriously enough. He is trying to help his wife but his actions risk alienating her.

The Salesman - Trailer

It's a characteristic of many Iranian films that small-scale domestic incidents can take on an epic quality. In Jafar Panahi's allegorical *The White Balloon* (1995), for example, an entire feature film hinges on a seven-year-old kid's quest to buy a goldfish. Here, the mood is darker but there is the same relentless focus on a single goal.

Between the sequences of Emad doing his sleuthing work, there are scenes of him back in the theatre with Rana (who plays Willy Loman's wife Linda) performing *Death Of A Salesman*.

Farhadi didn't attend the Oscars as a protest against US President Trump's travel ban stopping citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the US. However, by winning two Academy Awards in the space of five years (the first was for *A Separation* in 2012), he has already done a considerable amount for Iranian/US relations.

The Salesman is shot in the director's familiar realist fashion, with long takes and naturalistic performances. Farhadi focuses on what seem like banal everyday moments – negotiations over rent, shopping for groceries or bread, conversations on cell phones – but gradually gives us a far more nuanced view of his characters and their motivations than we would get in a more conventional film.

Shahab Hosseini is superb here as the tormented husband who feels the same powerlessness and sense of frustration as Willy Loman in Miller's play. He seems

sympathetic one moment and wantonly cruel the next. Taraneh Alidoosti is also very affecting as the traumatised wife, trying to make sense of an act of what appears to be random brutality.

In Farhadi's universe, ambiguity reigns. The villains turn out to be vulnerable and strangely sympathetic while the heroes are capable of extraordinary viciousness. What is also apparent is how little they understand one another. Everyone is capable of duplicity. Husbands and wives who lived together for years are baffled by one another's behaviour as they discover that, in extreme circumstances, they're simply no longer able to communicate with one another.

Tony Pipolo: "A Dangerous Method" (*Artforum*, January 24, 2017)

Asghar Farhadi's *The Salesman* is the director's latest, most excruciating dissection of contemporary Iran. As in his other films, Farhadi treats social conditions, and the urban blight and political corruption they imply, almost tangentially. They are neither ignored nor his primary focus, and they are not the target of the characters' or the viewers' animus. For a lesser director, the catastrophic early scene in which an apartment building almost collapses, forcing its tenants to seek temporary quarters elsewhere, would have been a sufficient cause for the events that follow. But Farhadi's method is more psychologically astute and essential to his aesthetic; he is more interested in the ambiguities and the nuances of human drama, in how people deal with domestic and personal crises generated by external circumstances. And so we follow Emad and Rana, a young married couple as they search for a place to live while trying to maintain their lives. Emad is a high school literature teacher, and both he and Rana perform in local theater—currently a production of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.

As if the crumbling walls in their apartment building were a foreshadowing of worse to come, a more personal catastrophe exposes cracks of another sort. As in Farhadi's *A Separation* (2011), a haphazard event provokes ever-widening consequences. Coincidences, nagging suspicions, half-truths, and unnerving disclosures accumulate while the catalytic incident that prompted them occurs off-screen and remains ambiguous. Though clearly a byproduct of the couple's forced move, this event produces even worse consequences. Unknown to them, the woman leasing a room in their temporary digs has frequent male visitors. One day, Rana, about to take a bath and thinking her husband is on his way up the stairs, leaves the door to the apartment ajar. We learn after the fact that a stranger entered the apartment and either molested or threatened to molest her, causing her to fall unconscious in the bathtub. Embarrassed to face interrogations, Rana refuses to speak to the police and can barely confide in her husband. More than one character agrees that police intervention would be pointless and would only expose her to shame and unwarranted accusations—an allusion to how ingrained social attitudes determine action, but suggested here without undue stress. Because Rana can neither be left alone nor continue rehearsing the play, tensions between husband and wife grow.

While Farhadi's characters are embedded in a specific social context, their appeal and their situations are not circumscribed by cultural conditions. In *The Salesman*, this reach toward universality is reflected by the parallel the film draws between the unsettling event that changes the characters' lives and the tragic fate of Willy Loman, the hapless everyman of Miller's play. But while the latter places the fate of its protagonist within a context of changing times, Farhadi's film conveys that there are neither easy answers nor easy solutions to the messiness of life, and one-dimensional characters, whether heroes or villains, are lame efforts to suggest otherwise.

In contrast to the inevitable denouement of the well-structured tragedy, Farhadi takes us toward an unexpected turn of events that precludes catharsis. Because his wife refuses to talk to the police, Emad, unable to contain his fury, seeks satisfaction himself. He is assisted in this quest when he happens upon the cellphone, keys, and money left behind by the stranger in his desperate flight out of the apartment. In tracking

down the perpetrator, he embarks on a path that exposes his own flaws and patriarchal tendencies, at odds with the protagonist we first encounter as a gifted artist, loving husband, and dedicated teacher. His search leads both to unexpected revelations and a 180-degree turn in the thrust of the narrative and our understanding of its characters—not to be disclosed here, and no doubt the reason Farhadi won the award for best screenplay at Cannes.

It is a mistake to dismiss Farhadi's narrative strategies as contrived, as some critics have. To do so underestimates the way his method generates close examination of the contradictions and subtleties of human behavior. His strongest asset as a director is his unbounded fascination with and compassion for the frailties of personality. What happens to his characters is as much a result of moral weakness as it is of accident and social conditions. Along with that, of course, is his unfailing talent for wresting moving, fine-tuned performances from his actors. Most outstanding among them are Shahab Hosseini and Taraneh Alidoosti as Emad and Rana and Farid Sajadhosseini as the intruding stranger.

"Farhadi's 'Salesman' Gets Free London Screening in Snub to Trump Ban" (*Financial Tribune*, February 4, 2017)

The mayor of London will join some of the leading names in British film at a free premiere screening of the Iranian Oscar-nominated film 'The Salesman', whose director was affected by Donald Trump's travel ban.

On February 26 - Academy Awards night - Trafalgar Square will be transformed into London's biggest open-air cinema for the first UK showing of Asghar Farhadi's drama, hours before the Oscars are handed out in Hollywood, todayevery.com reported.

Top names from the British film industry, including Palme d'Or-winning director Mike Leigh, will address an expected audience of up to 10,000 in central London.

'The Salesman' is nominated for best foreign language film at the Oscars. Farhadi, who previously won an Oscar for 'A Separation' in 2012, said he would not attend this year's ceremony even if he was offered special dispensation, in solidarity with those who had been affected by Trump's travel ban on visitors from seven predominantly Muslim countries: Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen.

Sadiq Khan, the London mayor, is organizing the screening, alongside the actor Lily Cole, producer Kate Wilson, and filmmaker Mark Donne, to coincide with the Oscars "to celebrate the capital's success as a creative hub and beacon for openness and diversity".

Farhadi said the Trafalgar Square screening had great symbolic value. "The gathering of the audience around 'The Salesman' in this famous London square is symbolic of unity against the division and separation of people."

"I offer my warmest thanks to the mayor of London and the cinema community for this generous initiative. I welcome and appreciate this invaluable show of solidarity," he added.

Leigh said Farhadi, who he has known since serving with him on the 2012 Berlin Film Festival jury, was "one of the world's greatest filmmakers".

"For those of us who make movies about real life, real people and real issues, he is a master, a true inspiration to all of us. We must show solidarity with Asghar and his principles, against divisiveness and hate," Leigh said.

The London screening will begin at 4.30pm. The film production company Curzon Artificial Eye is also showing the film across the country on the same day.

Trump's executive order, now blocked by the courts, has been roundly condemned by the international community and human rights groups.

Asghar Farhadi: On not coming to accept the Oscar

"I regret to announce via this statement that I have decided to not attend the Academy Awards Ceremony alongside my fellow members of the cinematic community.

Over the course of the past few days and despite the unjust circumstances which have risen for the immigrants and travelers of several countries to the United States, my decision had remained the same: to attend this ceremony and to express my opinions about these circumstances in the press surrounding the event. I neither had the intention to not attend nor did I want to boycott the event as a show of objection, for I know that many in the American film industry and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences are opposed to the fanaticism and extremism which are today taking place more than ever. Just as I had stated to my distributor in the United States on the day the nominees were announced, that I would be attending this ceremony along with my cinematographer, I continued to believe that I would be present at this great cultural event.

However, it now seems that the possibility of this presence is being accompanied by ifs and buts which are in no way acceptable to me even if exceptions were to be made for my trip. I would therefore like to convey via this statement what I would have expressed to the press were I to travel to the United States. Hard-liners, despite their nationalities, political arguments and wars, regard and understand the world in very much the same way. In order to understand the world, they have no choice but to regard it via an "us and them" mentality, which they use to create a fearful image of "them" and inflict fear in the people of their own countries.

This is not just limited to the United States; in my country hardliners are the same. For years on both sides of the ocean, groups of hardliners have tried to present to their people unrealistic and fearful images of various nations and cultures in order to turn their differences into disagreements, their disagreements into enmities and their enmities into fears. Instilling fear in the people is an important tool used to justify extremist and fanatic behavior by narrow-minded individuals.

However, I believe that the similarities among the human beings on this earth and its various lands, and among its cultures and its faiths, far outweigh their differences. I believe that the root cause of many of the hostilities among nations in the world today must be searched for in their reciprocal humiliation carried out in its past and no doubt the current humiliation of other nations are the seeds of tomorrow's hostilities. To humiliate one nation with the pretext of guarding the security of another is not a new phenomenon in history and has always laid the groundwork for the creation of future divide and enmity. I hereby express my condemnation of the unjust conditions forced upon some of my compatriots and the citizens of the other six countries trying to legally enter the United States of America and hope that the current situation will not give rise to further divide between nations.

Farnas Fassihi: "An Iranian Director's Rule: 'Always Focus on Ordinary People'" (*NY Times*, Feb. 25, 2022)

Asghar Farhadi made his first film at age 13, shot with an 8-millimeter camera, about two boys who agree to share an abandoned radio on alternate days, but who then discard it because neither can listen to their favorite nightly program.

The film — which won him a new bicycle as a prize — is a story of children grappling with trivial challenges. But like all stories Mr. Farhadi has scripted and directed to wide acclaim as one of Iran's pre-eminent filmmakers, it deployed the mundane to convey the profound.

"It is very valuable for me to always focus on ordinary people," Mr. Farhadi, who at 49 is a two-time Oscar winner, said in an interview from Los Angeles where he was visiting from his home base in Tehran. "I don't think my work will ever be about people who are

special or famous because they are not part of my emotional bank."

For the characters in that emotional bank, drawn largely from his own childhood, circumstance can turn a prized object into a useless annoyance. People struggle with painstaking decisions and intricate compromises, anticipating one outcome but facing an entirely different result. Individuals are nuanced, not easily categorized as saviors or villains.

His most recent film, "A Hero," which won the second-most prestigious prize at Cannes, ntegrates all these subthemes. Its ordinary characters are engulfed in chaos, suspense and thrill.

After all, Mr. Farhadi is a child of a revolution that toppled the monarchy, instituted an Islamic theocracy and turned America into a political enemy. By the time he was 10, Iran was at war with Iraq and children were practicing bunker drills in elementary school.

"Our childhood was at a time when we experienced a bomb exploding in our neighborhood," he said. "This is something that won't vanish from our memory, and it'll influence us forever."

If Mr. Farhadi were to name his personal hero, it would be his grandfather with whom he spent most of his childhood. He was not highly educated but a gifted storyteller who gathered the family around to tell feel-good tales.

Mr. Farhadi, the captive audience of his grandfather, wanted be like him. So, he made storytelling his profession.

The protagonist in "A Hero" is a man jailed for financial debt and struggling with a moral dilemma that could secure his release. News coverage and social media buzz elevate him into an overnight hero for a good deed. But the same forces quickly tear him down when twists and half-truths emerge, casting doubt on his motive.

Mr. Farhadi said the film examines why a society needs to make someone a hero. He wanted to show the flaws of idolizing a person and expecting others to follow. Time and insight will eventually bare the not-so perfect sides of a hero and the image will shatter, he said.

If his films are meant as social and political commentary, "A Hero" delivers a daring takedown of the tendency among Iranians to revere religious and political figures as Godlike. Mr. Farhadi said this outcome was inevitable "when you are trying to tell a story that is as close as possible to real life."

Iranians still name their children after ancient literary heroes. Shia Islam, Iran's dominant religion, is anchored on emulating religious clergy. The political structure of the country, from the Shahs to the current Supreme Leader, has centered on a cult of personality.

"In a society saturated with slogans, this could happen," said Mr. Farhadi. "We want to constantly create idols and, say, be like them. The core of it is wrong." He added, "When we have heroes in society, we are basically escaping from our responsibilities."

Mr. Farhadi, who lives in Tehran with his wife and younger daughter, says he is at his creative best when working in his home country. But he is not indifferent to the suffering he witnesses. He said the anger brewing among Iranians is palpable and nobody is trying to address it.

But at the same time, the younger generation of Iranians gives him hope, he said, because they ask questions and demand accountability.

As a public figure with an international platform, Mr. Farhadi is pressured to take sides. He is mindful that navigating Iran's political landscape requires a balancing act. If he keeps silent, he is criticized as a tool of the government. If he speaks too loudly, he could be banished to exile as other film directors have been.

Government supporters accuse him of making films that show a negative side of Iran. Others criticize what they regard as his excessively bright portrayals.

As a public figure with an international platform, Mr. Farhadi is pressured to take sides.

"For everything, not just for artists, for every aspect of Iranian life there is this polarization. It's not very transparent, you say something, and they interpret

it another way," said Mr. Farhadi. "The question is raised, where does one stand?"

Mr. Farhadi prefers to make statements through films, he said, because art is more enduring and impactful than passing comments. Occasionally, however, he just cannot hold his tongue.

In November, Mr. Farhadi railed at the government in a long Instagram post that declared: "Let me say it clearly, I despise you."

He condemned factions that try to define him as a government-affiliated artist and said if that's the perception, Iran should withdraw "A Hero" as its official entry for the Oscars. Iran did not. (The film made the initial Oscar list but was not nominated.)

In 2017, Mr. Farhadi took a stand against former President Donald Trump's travel ban policy, which affected Iranians, by boycotting the Academy Awards ceremony, where he won his second Oscar.

Hamid Naficy, an emeritus professor at Northwestern University and a scholar of Iranian cinema and culture, said that while Mr. Farhadi is one of Iran's most renowned filmmakers, he should not be expected to serve as a political ambassador.

Mr. Farhadi's contribution, Mr. Naficy said, was "to create a complex and thrilling and painful and joyful picture of a society that has had thousands of years of existence."

If Iranian filmmakers were to see their work as ambassadorial, he said, "it would be a kind of propaganda film for either side — pro-regime or anti-regime."

Mr. Farhadi was born in 1972 in Homayoun Shahr, a small town outside of Isfahan, to a middle-class family that owned a grocery store. He spent summers working at a local print shop framing and cutting photographs from customers' camera rolls. When he was a teenager, he found a book about making films and wrote his first screenplay, about the radio. He made the short film with the support of a local government-sponsored cultural center.

He moved to Tehran to attend university, majoring in theater and obtaining a master's degree in stage design. Mr. Farhadi wrote screenplays for state television and radio before writing and directing his own films.

In 2009, his film "About Elly" won best director at the Berlin film festival and best picture at the Tribeca film festival. In the world of global cinema, he attracted attention.

He went on to win two Oscars in the category of best international feature for "A Separation" in 2012 and "The Salesman" in 2018. Mr. Farhadi now belongs to an elite club of just a handful of iconic directors — Federico Fellini, Ingmar Bergman — who have won multiple Oscars in the foreign film category.

Despite all the accolades, Mr. Farhadi reminisces about the joy of seeing his first award, a beautiful bicycle placed onstage. He had attended the awards ceremony alone in Isfahan and worried how he would ride the bike home. Night had fallen and rain was pouring. Mr. Farhadi said he pedaled for two hours.

When his father opened the door and saw him drenched and exhausted but proudly showing off his prize, he didn't have the heart to scold him. He asked gently, "Was it worth it?"

That question has preoccupied Mr. Farhadi as he reflects on his career.

"I don't want to say that I'm not happy about my path, but people who get successful in life make other sacrifices," Mr. Farhadi said. "And sometimes you ask yourself, 'Was it worth it?'"

If he could ask his 13-year-old self now, with the hindsight of a celebrated director, Mr. Farhadi said, he would answer that "you didn't have to work so hard, you didn't have to start so early."

Cinema, he said, "isn't all there is to life. I realized this a bit late."

From Wikipedia: *Death of a Salesman* is a 1949 stage play written by American playwright Arthur Miller. The play premiered on Broadway in February 1949, running for 742 performances. It is a two-act tragedy set in 1940s New York told through a montage of memories, dreams, and arguments of the protagonist Willy Loman, a travelling salesman who is disappointed with his life, and appears to be slipping into senility. The play contains a variety of themes, such as the American Dream, the anatomy of truth, and infidelity. It explores the psychological chaos of the protagonist, and the capitalist society's impact on his life.[1][2] It won the 1949 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Tony Award for Best Play. It is considered by some critics to be one of the greatest plays of the 20th century.[3]

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Mar 8: 1950 Henry King, ***The Gunfighter*** *p$,* Tubi (free), YouTube (free)
Mar 15: 1958 Orson Welles ***Touch of Evil*** p$ UB-Swank
Mar 29: 1962 Yasujiro Ozu ***An Autumn Afternoon*** *c p$b* UB Kanopy
Apr 5: 1973 Federico Fellini ***Amarcord*** *c p$* UB Kanopy
Apr 12: 1993 Mike Leigh ***Naked*** c
Apr 19: 2002 Phillip Noyce ***Rabbit-Proof Fence*** p$ UB-Swank
Apr 26: 2016 Asghar Farhadi ***The Salesman*** *p*
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May 10: 2011 Martin Scorsese ***Hugo*** *p$* UB-Kanopy

CONTACTS:
...email Diane Christian: **engdc@buffalo.edu**
…email Bruce Jackson **bjackson@buffalo.edu**
....for cast and crew info on any film: **http://imdb.com/**

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