

Ava

A film by Sadaf Foroughi



103 min/Canada/Iran/Qatar/Farsi with English subtitles/2017/Cert tbc

World Premiere & FIPRESCI Discovery Section Award – Toronto International Film Festival

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SYNOPSIS

Ava (Mahour Jabbari) is a bright and diligent and teenager from a comfortable Tehran home who – like her peers – is concerned with both her academic and social status. However, Ava becomes distracted by a bet she has taken with her friends to win a date with Nima (Houman Housan), her violin partner. Ava desires to pursue a career in music but her controlling mother, Bahar (Bahar Noohian), who is a successful doctor, forbids this, whilst her father (Vahid Aghapoor), is willing to entertain the prospect. The divide between her parents manifests in contrasting parental styles and when Bahar learns of Ava's relationship with Nima, she becomes mistrustful and forces Ava to be checked by a gynaecologist. The incident enrages Ava and sets in motion a series of rebellious acts that irreparably impact her well-being and reputation. Without the support of her mother, Ava grows closer to her gentler father, but she is ultimately alone in her struggles against the constraints of her society.

Further information and downloads [here](#)

Photo set for download [here](#)



CAST

| | |
|------------|------------------|
| Ava | Mahour Jabbari |
| Mother | Bahar Noohian |
| Father | Vahid Aghapour |
| Melody | Shayesteh Sajadi |
| Ms Dekhoda | Leili Rashidi |

CREW

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Director | Sadaf Foroughi |
| Scriptwriter | Sadaf Foroughi |
| Cinematographer | Sina Kermanizadeh |
| Sound | Amirhossein Ghasemi |
| Editor | Kiarash Anvari |
| Producer | Sadaf Foroughi, Kiarash Anvari |
| Production Company | Sweet Delight Pictures |

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SADAF FOROUGHI

Sadaf Foroughi is an Iranian-born, Montreal-based filmmaker. She began her artistic career in 2003 by creating and producing short films, documentaries and video art. In 2005, she was selected to participate in the Berlinale Talent Campus as a writer/director.

Foroughi participated in the Berlinale Talent Campus, where she was selected to participate in the Why Democracy? short film project. Her short documentary *Féminin, Masculin* (2007) was nominated for the Best Non-European Film Award at the Grand Off-European Off Film Awards in Warsaw and won the Best Short Film Award at the Oxford Brookes University Annual Film and Music Festival.

Foroughi graduated with an MA in Film Studies from the University of Provence and obtained a degree in Film Production from the New York Film Academy. She co-wrote, co-produced and appeared in Kiarash Anvari's feature-length film *The Pot and the Oak* (2017), which had its World Premiere in the Bright Future Competition Section of the International Film Festival Rotterdam. Foroughi's debut feature film *Ava* had its premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2017. *Ava* was given an honorable mention as the best Canadian debut feature film and awarded the Discovery Section FIPRESCI Prize at the Toronto International Film Festival 2017.

FILMOGRAPHY

2017 AVA
2011 THE FINAL SCENE
2007 FÉMININ, MASCULIN
2004 AN IMPRESSION



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Ava is a women-driven coming-of-age drama which has the cinematographic aesthetic of a country in which there are restrictions on portraying women. The film tells the story of a teenage girl who is banished from all social institutions simply because she wants to be different. My main objective in making *Ava* was to examine the role and influence of women in this society. In this respect, my point of departure was a mother and daughter in a small society called “*home*” – mother as a person who gives birth to and nurtures her daughter as the generation that follows her own. Written and directed in the form of a musical variation, *Ava* pictures the possibilities in a society where external determination has become so overwhelming that the inner-motive forces have lost their weight.



INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

How did your childhood and adolescence in Iran inspire you to make Ava?

My main inspiration in making *Ava* was the taboos that have been engraved in my mind as a woman growing up in a traditional society, as well as the major detrimental impact that such tradition and repression can have on the well-being of the adolescent. The film portrays what women are confronting in Iranian society, telling the story of a teenage girl who is banished from all social institutions just because she wants to be different. I wanted to examine the function of a small

society called “home” and the role of women of this generation who give birth and nurture the next generation.

The cinematography of the film is so striking and beautifully composed. How did the look of the film come together?

I am very influenced by the culture of painting as I have a strong background in plastic art. By considering the impressionist approach for the ambience and aesthetic of the film, I wanted to move away from the daily realities and become closer to the truth behind the images. I carefully designed each shot, analysing my text and characters to find the best expression for each scene.



The camera appears as a voyeur who is trying to record family secrets, as long takes show pressures and embody time in its eternal process.

I believe that storytelling is a medium of communication, evolving into a visual language. *Ava* has the cinematographic aesthetic of a country in which there are restrictions on portraying women. I tried to create a personal language from the limitations I faced, whilst trying to achieve my own aesthetic.

What other films or filmmakers were you influenced by in making this film?

Ingmar Bergman, Ingmar Bergman and Ingmar Bergman – both for his character-driven storytelling and his pictorial language.

Ava has two important female relationships in her life, with her mother and with Melody. Can you discuss these relationships and how they shaped the film?

Ava's mother and Melody are two different aspects of Ava's identity. Ava defines herself in both of them and this is the internal contradiction of Ava's personality.

Tell us about the casting process. How did you find the young actresses to play Ava and Melody?

It was a long process, which took about a year. I was looking for a form of expression in Ava's face and someone who could also play violin. I searched almost all the girls' high schools in Tehran. I went to all violin classes and conservatories. Finally, I found my Ava, Mahour Jabbari, in a theatre school in Tehran. Concerning Melody, it was quite different. I found Shayesteh Sajadi in an acting school and I chose her in an audition. As soon as I saw her, I realised that she is Melody!

Can you discuss the role of music in the film and how it shaped the narrative?

Ava has been written and directed as a piece of music in the form of a Variation – the formal technique where the material is repeated in an altered form and evolves at the same time. This is how I shaped the narrative and cinematic language of *Ava*.

