

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY AMOS OZ

WRITTEN, DIRECTED BY AND STARRING  
NATALIE PORTMAN

# A Tale *of* **Love** and **Darkness**

## PRODUCTION NOTES

running time : 98 Minutes  
available format: DCP

### **Publicity Contact**

Maxine Leonard PR  
[Cannes2015@Maxineleonard.com](mailto:Cannes2015@Maxineleonard.com)

### **Distribution Contacts**

International  
Voltage Pictures  
662 N. Crescent Heights Blvd  
Los Angeles, CA 90048  
Allison Werner  
[Allison@voltagepictures.com](mailto:Allison@voltagepictures.com)

# A Tale *of* Love and Darkness

Based on Amos Oz's international best-seller, A TALE OF LOVE AND DARKNESS is the story of Oz's youth at the end of the British Mandate for Palestine and the early years of the State of Israel. The film details young Amos' relationship with his mother and his birth as a writer, looking at what happens when the stories we tell, become the stories we live.

PRODUCERS:	Ram Bergman, David Mandil
EXEC PRODUCERS:	Nicolas Chartier, Allison Shearmur
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY:	Slawomir Idziak
EDITOR:	Andrew Mondshein, A.C.E.
PRODUCTION DESIGNER:	Arad Sawat
COMPOSER:	Nicholas Britell
COSTUME DESIGNER:	Li Alembik
CAST:	Natalie Portman, Gilad Kahana, Amir Tessler
WRITER AND DIRECTOR:	Natalie Portman

# A Tale *of* Love *and* Darkness

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### SYNOPSIS

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*A Tale of Love and Darkness* is based on Amos Oz's memories of growing up in Jerusalem in the years before Israeli statehood with his parents; his the academic father, Arieh, and his dreamy, imaginative mother, Fania. They were one of many Jewish families who moved to Palestine from Europe during the 1930s and 1940s to escape persecution. Arieh was cautiously hopeful for the future. But Fania wanted much more. The terror of the war and the running had been followed by the tedium of everyday life, which weighed heavily on Fania's spirit. Unhappy in her marriage and intellectually stifled, to cheer herself, and to entertain 10-year-old Amos, she would make up stories of adventures, treks across the desert. Amos was enraptured while she read him poetry and explained to him about words and language in a way that would influence his writing his entire life. When the independence didn't bring with it the renewed sense of life that Fania had hoped for, she slips into solitude and sadness. Unable to help her, Amos must say good-bye before he is ready. As he witnesses the birth of a nation, he must come to terms with his own new beginning.

### ABOUT THE STORY

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*A Tale of Love and Darkness* was written by Israeli writer Amos Oz in 2004 and is Israel's best-selling novel of all time. It is also an international best-seller.

Writer/director Natalie Portman read *A Tale of Love and Darkness* about seven years ago. "I wanted to direct it the first time I read it," she said. "The book is really moving and beautifully written and so many of the stories sounded familiar. I had heard many stories about my grandparents and their relationship to books and learning and to language and to Europe and Israel - it felt familiar and something I was interested in exploring."

"I am a huge fan of Amos Oz," said producer Ram Bergman, "and I love the book. When I met Natalie she had been wanting to make the movie for a number of years, and it wasn't coming together. I wanted to get involved."

Ms. Portman describes the story. "It's about birth of a writer that happens because of a void his mother leaves," she said, "that he has to fill with words and stories. There's tension between them - she's pushing him to create but she's giving him the space he needs to fill. It's devastating, this incredible abandonment. But it is also this opportunity and she gives him the tools along the way."

The film starts in 1945 before the war of independence in Israel, when it is still a British mandate. The timeline shifts to 1953, several years after the state was recognized and when Amos moves to the kibbutz.

"It's a coming of age story," said Mr. Bergman, "but the book has so many different layers, it is hard to describe in words. It's a love story for a language and a country and the people, and of course, for his mother."

"I was aware of the book when it was first published," said producer David Mandil, "and two years ago when I got the script, I met with Ram Bergman and Natalie. I got to its depth with all of its complicity of place, language, culture and the disintegrating of this family. I think the fact its Amos Oz autobiography gives a different dimension to everything."

Mr. Oz had not expected that *A Tale of Love And Darkness* would be so successful internationally, he told Ms. Portman. "He was really surprised," said the director, "because it is so Israeli, but it is an immigrant story as well, which speaks to all cultures. It's about idealizing the place you are going to when you are in your mother country and then idealizing your mother country when you get to the new place."

"The wonderful thing that Amos did with the book," Ms. Portman continued, "is that he has such love and compassion and empathy for the people from his life. It's a nonjudgmental exploration of the characters."

### **ABOUT THE CHARACTERS**

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The primary characters are 10-year old Amos, his father, Arie, and his mother, Fania. Though intellectually compatible, the couple's marriage is unhappy. "Two very good people can live with each other and it just doesn't work," explains Ms. Portman. "Two people who mean well but are just not right for each other and can create a sort of hell that they live in. It's not drastic, they're not screaming and yelling and hitting, it's rather quiet, but it's not love. So it's an interesting arrangement with the parents and Amos is the third point of the triangle."

"Amos is a child, but a very perceptive and observant young man," she continued. "He has a real maturity and intelligence and sensitivity that came from his innate wisdom, but also from his experience of having a mother he had to watch and wonder if she was OK and how she was feeling and why she might be feeling that way. He has a real watchfulness in the movie trying to understand and help his mother."

Because the film takes place over a period of time, several different actors were used to show Amos at different stage of growing up. "There are three Amos' in the movie," said Ms. Portman. "We have the Amos we see in most of the movie, who is played by Amir Tessler, and he is nine. Then we see Amos later when he moves to the kibbutz, who is played by Yonatan Shiray when he is 16, and we have Amos today, in his 70s, who is played by Alex Peleg." The voice of Old Amos was narrated by Moni Moshonov, who is a well-known Israeli actor."

"Something really moving for me in the book was that a man at the age," she continued, "where he could be a father to his mother, looking back with that sympathy and understanding, like a paternal view of your own mother. It's a strange point of view to have. As a kid he was already taking care of his

mom, and as a grown man to have that memory and look at his mother with those eyes was important for the movie.”

“Arieh is a real intellectual and sort of disappointed with the way his career has turned out,” Ms. Portman describes Amos’ father and Fania’s husband. “He is trying to raise a genius, always educating Amos at every opportunity, and it worked. He created one.”

Ms. Portman plays Fania, Amos’ emotionally fragile mother. “Fania is a woman who was brought up with a romantic idealization of Israel,” she said. “Fania’s a young girl, in Rovno, and she is dreaming about art and Zionism and literature and she has this really romantic view of the world. Then we see her as a young mother in Palestine, where she is starting to come up against challenges, enjoying her child and life but then feeling the weight of the history and the political situation. Her mistakes and the marriage and woman’s work and the frustration of her artistry and all of these things together take to her to a hole that she drowns in. And we see this process with her.”

“The challenge of living when they came there,” said Mr. Bergman, “is that they expected and were promised one thing, and they got a different reality. It’s why Fania started deteriorating, it was the realization that what she was promised wasn’t coming true.”

Fania’s dreamy view of the world is in direct opposition to her husband’s pragmatic approach to life, and Ms. Portman believes it was the intellectual connection that drew her to Arieh in the first place. “I think Fania’s relationship to Arieh is about words,” she explained. “She’s also a woman of words and there is so much poetry and romanticism in the way he talks for the first time, you hear him talk about his love of connections and it can be very romantic and interesting for a young woman who loves books and loves stories and loves language.”

“Relationships in general were very different then,” Ms. Portman continued. “A woman had to rely on her husband to provide for her. Arieh was a very stable, steady presence in her life and a good husband and a good father but she was living in a Russian novel a little bit in terms of her relationship. The types of books you read or the types of movies you see and the kinds of stories you’re told growing up help shape the way you see the world and the relationships between people.”

“If you grow up on romantic comedies or fantasy novels it shapes your world in a way,” Ms. Portman continued, “and for Fania, reading this Russian literature –reading Chekhov and Tolstoy - there’s a very Russian kind of longing, very passionate ‘jump onto the train tracks for lost love’. When you grow up in that kind of environment - that’s why the Stiletsky story is part of her family mythology. It was one of the stories the family told over and over again, the way father got the flour mill and this wife who ran away with a lover and killed herself, that is part of the family mythology. Your understanding of how you are supposed to behave and how life is supposed to be - and it influences you.”

Ms. Portman tries to empathize with Fania’s choice to end her life. “Being a mom helped me understand Fania and not understand her at the same time,” she said. “You can’t imagine leaving your child. But at the same time, you understand how complicated it is being a mom. It’s a big challenge to change your identity. It’s a totally wonderful thing, but it’s a big change. I’m lucky not to have the same circumstances as her, but it is hard to imagine making that choice when you have a kid.”

## ***ABOUT THE PRODUCTION***

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Ms. Portman knew she wanted to make a movie based on the book, “but the part I didn’t know was that I was going to write it. I went around to a lot of writers to ask them to do it, and at the end some writer friends of mine said, ‘You should do it. Just do it. You have such specific ideas.’”

The writing turned out to be a rewarding experience for Ms. Portman. “I liked being in a room by myself with the words and changing things and coming up with ideas,” she said. “Later, I realized that when you have to make things come true, it is more challenging. I think when I write again I will know that if you write a burning house with a child running out of it how difficult that is to complete.”

“I also didn’t know was that I was going to act in it,” she continued. “I always thought I was just going to direct it, that someone else would act in it. I was 26 when I first started thinking about it, and Fania is certainly a much more mature woman. But I couldn’t get money to make the movie if I didn’t play the character,” Ms. Portman said with a smile. “I wanted to just direct it. No one would give me money, I tried for a few years, I couldn’t get it. And they said, ‘If you play it, we can fund you some.’ And so that’s how that happened.”

“By the time I got involved with the film, Natalie was playing the part,” said Mr. Bergman. “It was a no-brainer, she had to play Fania. She is one of the finest actors in the world – it’s perfect casting.”

Mr. Bergman described the launch of the project. “It was two years ago in Paris,” he said, “when Natalie told me she was ready to make this movie. I said, are you ready to put your life on the side and put other commitments aside? And she said yes. So I made some calls, I sent the script to David Mandil, who is one of the best producers in the world and the premiere Israeli producer, and he said he wanted to do it. Then I called Nicholas Chartier and asked him if he wanted to finance it, and he said yes before he even read the script. That is how he does things, which is why I love him. So very quickly we had a movie. Natalie moved to Israel to be there for a while perfecting the language.”

The film was shot entirely in Jerusalem and principal photography lasted six months. Post-production work was done outside Paris and in Los Angeles, and the sound was done in London.

Ms. Portman always intended to make film in Hebrew with sub-titles. “My initial attraction to the project was because of the language,” Ms. Portman said, who speaks fluent Hebrew, “and it seemed like a big mistake - a bad mistake - not to make it in Hebrew. It’s tricky because Americans tend to make movies about other places in English and give people a British accent and say that it’s Germany.” She laughed. “There are great movies like that, but I think that the way people are watching movies now, with the access to seeing foreign films, that people are used to watching subtitles. It’s preferable to hear the language where the movie takes place.”

“The question of how Fania got lost is one that Amos has had his whole life and what turned him into a storyteller. He had to go back into his memory to see what happened and where it went wrong, where she unraveled, because it was a mystery for him, too, and there’s no clear answer. It’s just looking for clues the whole way. That’s the back and forth.”

In the movie, a recurring figure called The Pioneer appears in Fania’s fantasies. “The Pioneer is the idealization of Israel,” said Ms. Portman. “He is the mythological Israel – the story of pioneers draining

swamps and turning them into orchards. He is the mythology we're raised on. And of course he changes and disappoints and abandons her, and losing that romantic mythology can be heartbreaking."

One of the major scenes in the film is at the declaration of the state, when Amos and Arieh meet Fania at the street gathering where everyone is listening to the radio together. "The UN is counting the votes for whether they're going to recognize the Jewish state, Israel," said Ms. Portman. "Everyone is waiting with great anxiety, of course, for them as a family this is a big moment - if there is a small point of light after the great darkness of what happened to their families in the war, or whether it's not going to happen and they will be plunged into more darkness. And of course the state is recognized and then the war starts that night."

M. Portman describes meeting and talking with people who were in Jerusalem that night in 1948. "It was this crazy thing," she said, "the most wonderful thing had happened with the declaration of the state and then it became this terrible thing with guns going off and the war starting."

Casting was one of Ms. Portman's favorite parts of the filmmaking process. She describes finding the actors. "It's really fun for me to see these characters come to life after living with them for so long," she said.

"I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with Amos," Ms. Portman continued. "Originally I thought to have him be quite young in the beginning, like a six-year-old, then 12 and a third one at 16. So we started auditioning every Ashkenazi boy we could find. I saw hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of auditions. Very quickly it became clear that a 6-year-old wasn't right. Amos had a more mature voice than a 6-year-old, and even with older kids - even 12 years old - it was hard to find someone who could handle the voice, which was mature and intellectual and often says things that children wouldn't necessarily say."

"And then we found Amir Tessler," Ms. Portman said proudly, "this magic, unbelievable child where we look at each other and say, did he really say that, did he do that? When I watched his tape I thought, he looks older, and when I met him, he was so small! I couldn't believe how young this child was because he projects this wisdom and maturity."

"I asked him what he liked to do in his spare time," Ms. Portman continued, "and he likes to watch 'Eretz Nehederet,' sort of an Israeli 'Saturday Night Live,' - very funny. And said he likes to do impressions and does his own version of the TV show and films it with his friend. He did these impressions for me that were hilarious."

"I felt so lucky, she added, "because to get on the set and to have Amir able to work full days without getting tired, without forgetting his lines, always being professional and nice and hard-working and listening and responding and asking intelligent questions and having great suggestions - he is a one in a billion, that child is really something else."

Casting Arieh was challenging because Ms. Portman wanted to make sure she had the right Ashkenazi ancestry. "The story is so specifically Eastern European," she said, "you really have to be accurate. Gilad was this wild idea our casting director had. She had wanted him to act for years, she had begged him to come in and he didn't want to. She asked him to come in for this movie and he didn't want to for a very long time, she just kept nagging at him and saying 'I have this feeling.'" And he finally came in and on his audition tape he had this cool haircut with the sides shaved and metal chains and a leather

jacket, totally the opposite of the part and just killed it, he made it his own. He's a real man of words, he cares about language, he cares about words, he's a writer himself, he writes poetry, he writes music and he became the character and had such an amazing attitude – going deep into the character and staying in character and being very professional. Again I feel so lucky because who knew?"

### **ABOUT DIRECTING**

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"I was obviously very nervous making my first film as a director," Ms. Portman admits. "I very worried about how it would go. I've made 35, 40 movies in my life and I have seen great things happen and I've seen terrible things happen. All the anxiety is that – you have someone difficult on the set, a hard personality, or people are fighting, or if you have problems with weather, if someone gets sick, if someone gets hurt, I've seen all of those things happen and they're all terrible - especially someone getting hurt is the worst nightmare.

"Of course, as the director you are responsible for that," she continued, "Everyone is here because of me and I want to ensure that everyone has a positive and a safe experience. That's really important and you have to balance that with getting what you want - am I going to make this person uncomfortable by making them do something that I want for my piece of art, you always have to balance that. I think it's definitely not worth hurting anyone physically or psychologically and so that is the top priority – that everyone is mentally and physically safe - but once that is established – that's it's safe, then you have to push for everything. It was a great experience and luckily I had incredible people around willing to push hard."

"Natalie did a fantastic job," said Mr. Bergman. "Directing yourself is hard enough, but she was also directing a small child in a foreign language, and starring in it. But she pulled it off. She had a vision for the movie."

Ms. Portman described her approach to working with actors as a director. "Being an actor, I appreciate a director letting me try things," she said. "I like people's natural expression. Trying to mold someone into something can make them stiff and uncomfortable. I like to see what people will do on their own first."

"In some ways it is easier to direct yourself," she went on, "because you don't have to put it into words. I can watch and I can understand what I want. When you are directing someone else you have to figure out how to explain it in a way they understand and that helps them and that isn't insulting, and also in the way that they'll get the right reaction. If they think, oh, I should be happier, they lose everything natural. You also have to figure out the right thing to say to the right person and that can take time. It's hard to watch yourself, sometimes I want to cover my eyes and not do another take, or I want to do 15 takes cause I'm just not happy with it. I'm more judgmental of myself than I am of other people."

"As an actor," said Ms. Portman, "you're always creating a director's vision and I got to a point where I wanted it to be my vision and my ideas and my feelings and my way of seeing the world. I feel so grateful to all the actors and all the crew members who helped create my vision and I see how much they tried to create what I wanted even if they didn't agree with it or had different ideas. They were listening to me, and that's what I have done for the past 20 years for other people's visions and will continue to do now. It's nice to have the opportunity to express myself fully, through my eyes."



She laughs. "Another thing - when I write again something for myself or someone else, I won't put in so much rain. Water, it's really not comfortable. I like to work hard but I don't like to suffer. It's not fun. But unfortunately it is very cinematic, it's very symbolic of what Fania's going through - you feel because the presence of the rain and the water that it is taking her under."

"The directing was really amazing because I was surrounded by the best people," said Ms. Portman, "really great people from the whole crew and cast who all did their jobs really well, which makes the director's job pretty easy."

"Natalie and I have a very good rapport that continues to this day," said Mr. Bergman. "She put a lot of hard work into it. She did not try to get by on her stardom, far from it, she worked her ass off 24 hours for at least a year and she really committed. She turned down some other jobs and huge paydays because this is what you have to do when you are making a movie."

### **ABOUT THE LANGUAGE**

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"I think the first thing that attracted me was the story of their language," Ms. Portman said. "One of the most impressive accomplishments of Israel was to make the Hebrew language alive again after so many years, centuries, when it was a religious language, not a spoken language. It's fascinating to me to think that in Biblical times they were thinking of the connection between the shared roots of words. It gives you this appreciation of poetry and the soul of man that has existed for so long."

"Language is definitely a character in the movie," she continued. "Arieh is the main conduit for the language, he's always talking about word etymology and how words are related. When they are gardening, he's explaining how earth is connected to man and blood and silence – it could tell the whole story of the movie – and the language figures physically as well."

Ms. Portman was born in Israel and lived there until she was three with her Israeli father and American mother. "My parents sent me to a Jewish school until I was 13. We had a half-day of Hebrew and a half-day of English, so I can read and write, but my spoken Hebrew has always been a little behind, because we did a lot of reading and writing. Then I moved back to Israel when I was 25 for graduate school for six months. That's when my Hebrew got good because I was just going out and hanging with Israelis, going to bars and parties. That's the best way to learn a language."

"There's always been this strange thing where Hebrew is my first language, but it's a strange language to me because it's not the language I grew up with. So it's not the language I am most comfortable with, but my earliest memories should be in that language. But you don't remember before 3 years old." She smiled. "So somewhere deep inside me, there's a mystery."

Ms. Portman maintained her Hebrew fluency, but as she admits, "I thought my Hebrew was a lot better than it actually was. It was challenging, but like most challenges, it helped that I was a little bit overconfident," she smiles. "I had a great coach, Neta Riskin, who also appears in the movie and she is fantastic – she gave me some tips and exercises so I could make my Hebrew sound non-American. I still sound foreign, but not American, which works for the character. It was fun getting to understand all the tricks that go into sounding like an Israeli."

## ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHY

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Mr. Bergman was thrilled when he was told Ms. Portman was talking to Slawomir Idziak about coming on as DP. "Slawomir is a phenomenal DP," he said. "Natalie was talking to some DPs from Israel and some not from Israel. There are a lot of great DPs, but what made Slawomir so special is what the project meant to him, and the thought behind it. It is a gorgeous movie, visually beautiful."

Mr. Idziak and Ms. Portman developed a close working relationship on the set. "We talked a lot about how I wanted the look of the film to be realistic and dreary, almost documentary level of seeing this world with the colors drained out," said Ms. Portman. "So it's quite green and blue in our Jerusalem world, and then the stories of the family histories are filled with passionate colors. The colors come out very intense because that is what she romantic idealizes, the longing for Europe that never exists, the Europe of her imagination that figures in her stories, is full of all this color. Then we come back and it's the Jerusalem stone and the bright light and the dusty light."

"I think there was something interesting with the fact it was his first time shooting in Israel and in Jerusalem specifically," said Mr. Mandil. "The angle of a DP looking at Jerusalem for the first time is similar to the POV of the immigrants, like the family in the film, that arrived to Jerusalem back then."

"We brought in a lot of black," said Ms. Portman, "that was Slawomir's idea to go to black often and obviously we have this darkness in the title and the story and a physical presence in the movie, so we found a few places where this darkness becomes like a character itself."

Mr. Mandil agrees. "I think Slawomir brought a lot of inspiration to this film, he understood the script and it origins deeply and the photography corresponds with the story. His use of darkness and light through all the film tightens the story."

"Slawomir is one of the great DPs," said Ms. Portman, "and I felt so lucky that he was even interested in making this. I can't believe I got to work with him on my first feature. I have admired the *Double Life of Veronique* and *Blue* and all of his films but those in particular – they are very female-centered stories and I think he has a good eye for seeing the world from a woman's point of view and from inside her head."

"He has an emotional connection to Israel," she continued, "so it was really great getting to work with him and his ideas and his input and his eye. He works like a painter, so specific with his light and color, and really made some dramatic and helpful choices for the movie."

## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION DESIGN

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Ms. Portman was also pleased with her collaboration with the production designer, Arad Sawat. "Building the house was challenging because the way Amos described it, he said it was very very small but obviously to make a film we had to make it bigger for the lights and cameras and lots of people," she said. "So that was the challenge. We wanted to make it look small and have it full of books but not look like a library. Arad did a really fantastic job with that."

"It was a very emotional moment on the set when Amos came to visit," recalled Mr. Bergman. "It was his house in Jerusalem, where he grew up, that he was seeing. It was very special for everyone."

"I think a lot in this film is its design," said Mr. Mandil. "The cooperation between Arad and Natalie and Slawomir created an authentic world of Israel in the end of the 1940's, and Arad's color palate was from the world of darkness and light. One of the biggest challenges of this film was to make it credible, especially the outside worlds and since Jerusalem today is much more modern we had to go back to the old neighborhoods and redesign them especially for this film."

Mr. Bergman talked about shooting in the old city. "There are so many areas that still look like they did 60 or 70 years ago," he said, "and so it wasn't hard to find. Some people in the more ancient and Orthodox areas were concerned about crowds gathering to gawk. But our crew had great respect for where and what they were shooting. And people realized this is a labor of love movie and it's not just about Natalie being a star."

"It was a great experience and I'm lucky everything went so well," said Ms. Portman. "Everyone was such a good person, everyone was nice to each other, was a nice environment on set, we got really lucky with weather, the crew and actors did just the best job so I feel pretty pleased."

#### ***ABOUT JEWISH HISTORY AND CULTURE***

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Ms. Portman is keenly interested in how Israelis have maintained an ongoing mythology, based on a shared history and stories told in families. "I grew up with a certain set of stories, these stories about your family – how mom and dad met, how your grandparents emigrated, how you were born. For many Jews and Israelis, there is Holocaust mythology and Israel mythology – turning swamps into orchards – everyone else in this room heard the same set of stories, and that's what builds a culture. It's interesting breaking it apart and understanding it - what part of it is mythology, what part of it is true, what part of it is exaggerated, what part of it is propaganda. There's part truths and part storytelling and that's how you create a cultural identity."

"I went to Jewish school in the United States until I was 13," Ms. Portman continued, "and we didn't learn about the Jewish intellectual history of Iraq or the Spanish mysticism in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, all these really fascinating, incredible accomplishments of Jewish people throughout history. But I know every detail about the Holocaust. It was pounded into us. It impacted me a lot. What is the influence of that, when the main history you're taught is the victimization of your own people? I'm not saying it shouldn't be taught, but other things should be taught, the accomplishments of the people or the rest of history, too."

"I'm Israeli and I'm American," said Ms. Portman, "but culturally I'm more American because I grew up there - the music and the TV shows I watched and the books I read, that's very American to me. My cultural identity is very Israeli. I'm a little bit of a stranger in both places."

### ***Natalie Portman – Writer, Director, role of Fania***

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Natalie Portman received her second Academy Award® nomination and first Best Actress win for her performance in Darren Aronofsky's critically acclaimed film, *Black Swan*. For her role, Portman also received a Golden Globe, BAFTA Award, Screen Actors Guild Award, and Critics Choice Award.

On screen, Portman has starred in over twenty-five films. She made her debut in Luc Besson's 1994 film, *The Professional*, and went to star in *Heat*, *Beautiful Girls*, *Everyone Says I Love You*, *Mars Attacks!*, *Anywhere But Here* (Golden Globe nomination), *Where The Heart Is*, *Cold Mountain*, *Garden State*, *Closer* (Academy® Award nomination and Golden Globe Award), *Free Zone*, *V For Vendetta*, *Paris Je T'aime*, *Goya's Ghosts*, *My Blueberry Nights*, *Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium*, *The Other Boleyn Girl*, *New York, I Love You*, *The Other Woman*, *Brothers*, *No Strings Attached*, *Your Highness*, *Thor* and *Hesher*. Additionally, she starred in George Lucas' *Star Wars: Episode 1: The Phantom Menace*, *Star Wars: Episode II: Attack Of The Clones* and *Star Wars: Episode III: Revenge Of The Sith*. The prequels to the wildly popular *Star Wars* trilogy of the 70's and 80's rank among the top-grossing films ever produced worldwide. Portman was recently seen opposite Chris Hemsworth in Marvel's *Thor: The Dark World*. She recently appeared in Terrence Malick's two upcoming films, including *Knight Of Cups*, which made its World Premiere at the 2015 Berlin Film Festival. She will next be seen in Gavin O'Connor's *Jane Got A Gun* for Relativity.

On stage, Portman starred in Mike Nichol's Shakespeare in the Park production of [The Seagull](#), opposite Meryl Streep, Kevin Kline and Philip Seymour Hoffman; as well as in James Lapine's Broadway production of [The Diary Of Anne Frank](#).

Portman has also taken on a variety of roles behind the lens. She wrote, directed, produced, and starred in *A Tale Of Love And Darkness*, which will make its World Premiere at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival. The story, based on the memoir by Amos Oz, revolves around Oz's childhood in Jerusalem in the period following the end of the British Mandate for Palestine and the early years of the State of Israel, in addition to his teenage years on a kibbutz. Portman's credits also include *Eve*, which she wrote and directed, telling the story of a young woman who ends up on her grandmother's date. The short film debuted at the 2008 Venice Film Festival and stars Lauren Bacall, Ben Gazzara and Olivia Thirlby. She also wrote and directed a short film for *New York, I Love You*, about a day in the life of a father and daughter in Central Park. The film showcases twelve filmmakers who each directed a vignette illustrating the universal theme of love within the five boroughs of New York City.

Upcoming projects include the documentary *Seventh Fire* about a group of Native American gang members, the New York Times bestselling novel *Pride And Prejudice And Zombies* with Panorama. Portman will also produce the documentary *Eating Animals* based on the book by Jonathan Safran Foer.

Portman became the first Ambassador of Hope for FINCA, an international village banking microfinance program providing small loans and savings programs to the world's poorest families so they may create their own jobs, raise household incomes, and improve their standard of living thereby reducing poverty worldwide. As the Ambassador of Hope, Portman has proved to be a globally aware and dedicated individual who supports the work of FINCA through her advocacy and visits to FINCA International programs in countries such as Guatemala, Ecuador and Uganda. She has also met with high-level United States Members of Congress to lobby for support of international microfinance funding.

As an Ambassador of Free The Children, Portman lends her time to the organization that empowers youth to remove barriers that prevent them from being active local and global citizens. The charity works on international projects, including the Adopt a Village model, which brings over 650 schools and school rooms to youth and provides clean water, health care and sanitation to one million people around the world, freeing children and their families from the cycle of poverty.

A Harvard graduate with a degree in psychology, Portman has also studied at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

### ***Gilad Kahana – Arieh***

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Gilad Kahana is an Israeli singer, composer, writer, and lead singer for the band Girafot. Kahana was born in Mexico to an Israeli family. His family moved back to Israel when he was nine years old and settled in Tel Aviv. He started the musical band Girafot in 1992 with Yair Kass. In 1999, the band released its first Hebrew album named *Conversations with a Chair*. In 2000, Kahana decided on a solo career with the issue of his first solo album *I Forgot How to Eat*, which he produced and recorded on his own.

In 2002, Girafot toured Israel, which garnered them much popularity and recognition. In 2004, he published his first English solo album, called *The Promised Landing*, and also published the instrumental album *360*. In 2006, he co-released an album called *Roof* with Girafot that won positive reviews and commercial success, a gold album. In 2008, the band went on tour in India, and filmed a documentary. He was in Mumbai with Girafot during the 2008 Mumbai attacks and was able to capture the events on camera. The documentary film was published in 2009. He published a solo album that same year, *The Walking Man (2bVIBES)*, and the Girafot Hebrew album *No Elephants Allowed* in early 2010.

In September 2011, Kahana produced the album *Bad Love* in English, under the pseudonym *The Walking Man*. Its first release was free to readers of the Tel Aviv newspaper *Akhbar Ha'ir* in Ha'ir as a

gift. Kahana composed the music and lyrics, and the performance was accompanied by Ninet Tayeb. Kahana has also written several other songs for numerous famous Israeli singers, including Yoni Bloch, David Broza, Eviatar Banai, Hadag Nahash and Arkadi Duchin.

He published two books in Hebrew in 2003 and 2009. And this year he will publish his 3<sup>rd</sup> book.

Books:

Plan for Disaster Recovery (2002 Keter publishing)

A Crane Points to the Sea (2010 Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House LTD.)

The punctuation of unknowns (2014 Even Hoshen publishing)

### ***Ram Bergman - Producer***

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Ram Bergman is currently in pre-production as producer on *Star Wars: Episode VIII*, with longtime collaborator Rian Johnson set to write and direct. Earlier in 2015, Mr. Bergman completed work on the Tarsem Singh-directed thriller *Self/Less*, starring Ryan Reynolds and Ben Kingsley, which is scheduled for theatrical release worldwide in July 2015. In 2013, Mr. Bergman produced Joseph Gordon-Levitt's critically acclaimed directorial debut *Don Jon*. Past credits include Rian Johnson's celebrated time-travel thriller *Looper*, as well as his earlier works *The Brothers Bloom* and *Brick*; Patricia Riggen's *Under The Same Moon*; Michael Radford's *Dancing at the Blue Iguana*, among others. Bergman was nominated for the Producer Award at the 2006 Film Independent's Spirit Awards, and was named one of the Ten Producers to Watch by Variety in 2005.

### ***David Mandil - Producer***

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Movieplus Productions is an independent production company established by David Mandil, specialising in feature films, documentaries, TV series and dramas. Over the years the company has produced more than 20 feature films. These include Joseph Cedar's award-winning *Footnote*, which won Best Screenplay at Cannes 2011 and was an Academy® Award-nominee for Best Foreign Language Film in 2012, and *Beaufort*, which won the Silver Bear at the Berlinale 2007, and was an Academy® Award nominee for Best Foreign Language Film in 2008. MoviePlus recently produced Joseph Cedar's *Oppenheimer Strategies*, starring Richard Gear, and *Self Made* by Shira Geffen, that won the new Auteurs Critics Award at AFI in 2014.

### ***Amir Tessler - Amos***

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Amir was born in Tel Aviv in 2005. *A Tale of Love and Darkness* is his first film. Amir has a younger sister and brother and he is attending the 4<sup>th</sup> grade at elementary school. He has been participating in drama classes since he was 4 years old.

### ***Nicolas Chartier – Executive Producer***

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Nicolas Chartier, the Academy® Award-winning producer of *The Hurt Locker*, has been involved in the financing, production and sales of a diverse range of films. In 2005, he founded Voltage Pictures, an international financing, sales and production operation. He has handled over 150 movies in the past six years. *The Hurt Locker* was Voltage Pictures' first in-house production and claimed six Oscars® in 2009, including Best Picture. *Killer Joe* was Voltage's second in-house film, directed by William Friedkin and starring Matthew McConaughey and Emile Hirsch, which was released by LD Entertainment. Recently Nicolas produced *Dallas Buyers Club*, which won an Academy® Best Actor Award for Matthew McConaughey and Best Supporting Actor for Jared Leto. He also produced *The Company You Keep*, directed by Robert Redford and starring Robert Redford, Shia LaBeouf, Nick Nolte, Susan Sarandon, Julie Christie and Brit Marling, which premiered at the 2012 Venice Film Festival. More recently, Nicolas executive produced *The Necessary Death of Charlie Countryman* directed by 4-time nominated DGA director Frederik Bond, starring Shia LaBeouf and Evan Rachel Wood. He also produced *Don Jon*, directed by Joseph Gordon-Levitt, starring Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Scarlett Johansson, and Julianne Moore. Nicolas is currently producing *Good Kill*, written and directed by Andrew Niccol, starring Ethan Hawke, January Jones, and Zoe Kravitz, and *Fathers and Daughters*, starring Russell Crowe, Amanda Seyfried, Aaron Paul, and Diane Kruger and directed by Gabrielle Muccino.

Prior to forming Voltage, Chartier was VP of sales and acquisitions at Myriad Pictures. He was involved in the sales of a diverse range of films there such as *The Good Girl* and *Van Wilder*. As the President of Vortex Pictures, he sold titles such as *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* and Nicolas Cage's *Sonny*. As head of sales and acquisitions at Arclight Films, Chartier acquired Dean Devlin's *The Librarian*, the 2006 Academy® Award winner *Crash* and *The Matador*, starring Pierce Brosnan. During his time at Arclight, Chartier also sold *Lord of War* starring Nicolas Cage and *The Merchant of Venice* starring Al Pacino.

### ***Allison Shearmur – Executive Producer***

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Allison Shearmur is a Los Angeles-based film and television producer. She is currently producing *Power Rangers* with the Saban Company for Lionsgate Films; *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, produced alongside Natalie Portman and her Handsomecharlie Films, written and directed by Burr Steers and starring Lily James, Sam Riley, Douglas Booth and Jack Huston which Screen Gems will release in 2016; *Nerve*, directed by Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman and starring Dave Franco and Emma Roberts for Lionsgate Films; and is executive producing with Ron Howard the television series "The Clan of the Cave Bear," for Fox 21, Lionsgate and Lifetime Television which is written by Linda Woolverton and will be directed by Pierre Morel. She also produced *Cinderella*, directed by Sir Kenneth Branagh and starring Cate Blanchett, Helena Bonham Carter, Lily James, Richard Madden and Stellan Skarsgård for the Walt Disney Company; and executive produced Lionsgate's *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 1* and *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 2*.

Ms. Shearmur was the President of Production and Development at Lionsgate Films from September 2008 – January 2012. She oversaw the day-to-day development and production of the studio's film slate and literary acquisitions, including production of hit book and box office blockbuster *The Hunger Games*, directed by multiple Academy Award® nominee Gary Ross and starring Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson, Liam Hemsworth, Woody Harrelson, Elizabeth Banks, Lenny Kravitz and Stanley Tucci.

Before Lionsgate, Ms. Shearmur was Co-President of Production of Paramount Pictures. While at Paramount she oversaw such productions as *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, *Beowulf*, *Zodiac*, *Dreamgirls*, *Charlotte's Web*, *Nacho Libre* and *Failure to Launch*.

Prior to Paramount, she served as Executive Vice President of Production for Universal Pictures where she initiated development and oversaw production of such hits as the *Bourne* trilogy, as well as the *American Pie* trilogy. Shearmur was Vice President of Production for Walt Disney Pictures from 1994 through 1997. While at Walt Disney Pictures, she developed and supervised *George of the Jungle*, starring Brendan Fraser and directed by Sam Weisman. *The Hunger Games*, *Bourne* and *American Pie* franchises have grossed more than a billion dollars each.

A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, Allison received a JD degree from USC Law Center and is a member of the California bar.

### ***Slawomir Idziak – Director of Photography***

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Slawomir Idziak is an Academy® Award-nominated Polish cinematographer who has worked on over forty foreign films. He got his start working with director Krzysztof Kieslowski. Together they made over fourteen films, including *The Constant Factor* and *The Year Of The Quiet Sun*; their collaborative efforts led to several other works within television and foreign debuts. Idziak continued to hone his craft, going on to make films with such directors as Ridley Scott, John Sayles, John Duigan, and Michael Winterbottom, whose feature *I Want You*, won Idziak an Honorable Mention award at the 48th Berlin International Film Festival. Idziak then turned his attention to more mainstream films such as *King Arthur* and *Black Hawk Down*, for which he received an Academy® Award nomination and a BAFTA for Best Cinematography in a Motion Picture. Shortly after, Idziak continued his work in big budget films collaborating with Director David Yates on the fifth Harry Potter installment, *Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix*. He has since gone on to write and direct two films himself. Currently, Idziak finds time to teach at film schools located in Berlin, London, and Copenhagen in between his continued work on various projects.

Additionally, Idziak has recently helped to create the virtual film studio website Film Spring Open, which allows users to create films online and subsequently present their work to a global audience. Film Spring Open aims to create an international kinship among impassioned filmmakers, who wish to provide support for each other through the filmmaking process and ensure optimal advertising and distribution of their work.



### **Andrew Mondshein - Editor**

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*A Tale of Love and Darkness* marks the first collaboration between Academy® Award-nominated film editor Andrew Mondshein and director Natalie Portman. Mondshein began his editing career in 1979, under the tutelage of legendary director Sidney Lumet. The two collaborated on five films including the award-winning *Running on Empty*.

Mondshein's other editing credits include eight films with Swedish director Lasse Hallström. Included in their association are the award-winning films *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, *Chocolat* and *The Cider House Rules*, three films for Susan Seidelman including the cult favorite, *Desperately Seeking Susan*, and films for directors Harold Ramis (*Analyze That*), Kirk Jones (*Everybody's Fine*), Robert Benton (*Feast of Love*), Alan Coulter (*Remember Me*), Sophie Barthes (*Cold Souls*) and Joseph Ruben (*Return to Paradise*).

In 2000, Mondshein was nominated for an Academy® Award for his editorial work on director M. Night Shyamalan's hit film *The Sixth Sense*. Mondshein has also been nominated for a British Academy Award, two A.C.E. awards, and won the 1999 Golden Satellite award for best feature editing.

Outside his editing duties Mondshein has directed the second camera unit on eight films including *The Sixth Sense*, *The Shipping News*, *Gilbert Grape* and *Running on Empty*. He directed his first film in 1998 for MGM/Showtime, *Evidence of Blood*, starring David Strathairn and Mary McDonnell.

Mondshein and his wife, film producer Leslie Holleran, have two sons, screenwriters Spencer and Taylor Mondshein.

### **Arad Sawat - Production Designer**

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In 1993 Arad Sawat began work as stylist for the Art Department of Israel Educational Television. In the late 90s, he began working as a set designer in drama and other television productions, as well as designing sets for commercial advertising. In particular, he designed and created sets that were built outside the television studios. Over the years he broadened the scope of his portfolio and applied his professional expertise to include architectural and spatial design in commercial and industrial complexes.

In 2011, based on his experience in set, product and interior design, Sawat began working in feature film production design and created sets for various television companies such as FOX Sports, Star TV, the Israel Sports Channel, Keshet, Reshet and others. Recent and upcoming film credits include:

*Oppenheimer Strategies* (2015), director Yosef Cedar

*The Farewell Party* (2014), directors Tal Granit and Sharon Maymon

*Self Made* (2014), director Shira Gefen

*70 Years Venezia – The Venice International Festival* (2013), director Shmulik Maoz

*Hunting Elephants* (2013), director Reshef Levy

*Footnote* (2011), director Yosef Cedar

His awards include:

Ofir Prize for Best Artistic Design, *Footnote* (Best Screenplay Award at the Cannes Festival 2011)

Ofir Price for the Best Artistic Design for *Who is Afraid of the Bad Wolf*

### ***Nicholas Britell - Composer***

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Nicholas Britell is an award-winning composer, pianist, and producer. His music featured prominently in director Steve McQueen's Oscar-winning film *12 Years A Slave*, for which he composed and arranged the on-camera music including the violin performances, spiritual songs, work songs, and dances. Britell's work and projects have been highlighted in publications including the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, New York Magazine, and Vogue, which called him among "the most talented young artists at work." He recently finished the score for Natalie Portman's directorial debut feature film *A Tale Of Love And Darkness* that was selected for a special screening at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival. In addition, Britell has scored Jack Pettibone Riccobono's documentary *The Seventh Fire* that premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival in February 2015.

Britell also wrote the score for the film *Gimme The Loot* (directed by Adam Leon), which won the Grand Jury Prize at SXSW in March 2012 and was an Official Selection for the 2012 Cannes Film Festival (*Un Certain Regard*). He was awarded the Henry Mancini Fellowship from the ASCAP Foundation in December 2012 and also won the ASCAP/Doddle Award for Collaborative Achievement. Britell serves on the executive board of L.A. Dance Project and is Chairman of the New York-based Decoda Ensemble, the first-ever affiliate ensemble of Carnegie Hall.

As a producer, Britell produced the short film *Whiplash*, directed by Damien Chazelle, which won the Jury Award for Best US Fiction Short at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival. After the initial success of the *Whiplash* short, he subsequently helped produce the Oscar®-winning feature film *Whiplash*, which also won Sundance's 2014 Jury Prize and its Audience Award. In addition to serving as co-producer on the feature, Britell helped record and produce music for the soundtrack (including the songs "No Two Words," "When I Wake," and "Reaction"). Britell has produced

numerous other projects with The Amoveo Company, a multimedia production company and artists' collective that he co-founded with Benjamin Millepied. Among their projects, Amoveo collaborated with director Alejandro Iñárritu to produce his short film *Naran Ja*; other projects include ballet and film commissions from Van Cleef & Arpels, production on the 30th Anniversary of Canal + live show broadcast, and brand partnerships with Feit shoes and Maiyet. Britell is an honors and *Phi Beta Kappa* graduate of Harvard University, as well as a piano performance graduate of the Juilliard School's Pre-College Division.

### ***Li Alembik - Costume Designer***

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Li Alembik is one of the Israel's leading costume designers. In the last 12 years she has set the tone and style of Israel's emerging film industry, and designed costumes for many acclaimed movies, winning many awards including the "Ophir" award (The Israeli Oscar) for the movie *Farewell Bagdad*. Ms. Alembik's background in landscape design and art history and growing up in the fashion world has enabled her to bring an acute and original aesthetic vision into her design world. She sees her work as the synergy between her love for fashion, art and especially cinema. Her film credits include:

*A Tale of Love and Darkness – 2015*

*Get – 2013*

*Farewell Baghdad – 2012*

*The Slut – 2011*

*Testimony – 2010*

*Miral – 2010*

*Jaffa – 2009*

*Jellyfish – 2007*

*My Treasure - 2004*

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