

A FILM BY DINA AMER

#### EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

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# AMARDS









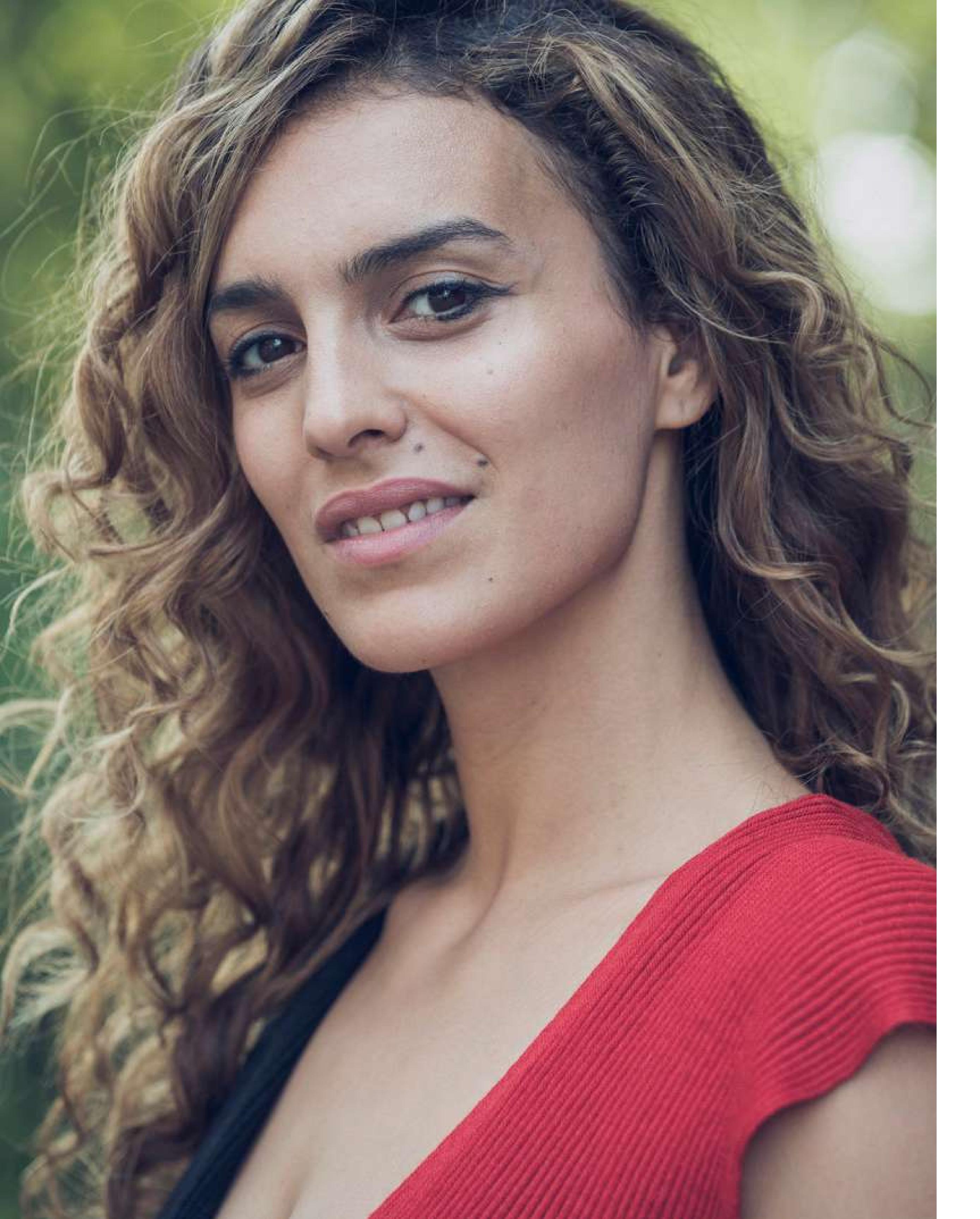


Cultural and intergenerational trauma erupt in this story about two sisters on the outskirts of Paris.

After the siblings are torn apart, the eldest,
Hasna, struggles to find her identity, leading to
a choice that shocks the world.

Director Dina Amer takes on one of the darkest issues of our time and deconstructs it in an intimate story about family, love, sisterhood, and belonging.





## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

As a Muslim Egyptian woman living in the West, I've struggled to reconcile pieces of my identity that feel contradictory. I am a woman who has spent the majority of my life praying discreetly in public spaces (airports are the hardest). And yet I don't look like what most of society envisions as a Muslim woman. I don't wear a hijab and I love Cardi B. Throughout my life I've lived through the shadow of how the failure to reconcile a Muslim Western identity with such clear contradictions can result in a haunting headline.

This film is a journey through layers of disassociation, from the personal and familial to the religious and colonial; a kaleidoscope of splintered identities and fractured dreams. You Resemble Me explores the unexamined roots of trauma and the devastating decision that one woman made in the name of belonging. The mission of this film is not to excuse her choice but to examine how she arrived at that decision. The intention of this exploration is that it can help inform us as a society how to safeguard other individuals from falling into the same traps. In the making of the film, I drew from my experience within underserved and

marginalized communities; there are so many people who resemble the main character, Hasna. Many people desperately seek a sense of identity, family, direction, and love in all the wrong places, yet some like Hasna — grab our attention in the worst way when their search goes wrong.

It was not until I spent six months with incarcerated men at Rikers Island prison during a cinema and theater exchange, that I realized I cannot define someone by their worst action, and that every human is worthy of redemption. In seeking to understand Hasna, I saw myself in her humanity and her family saw me in her. Hence, the title, You Resemble Me.

It was important for me to allow the audience an experience where they can put themselves in her shoes and experience her multiplicity and moments of disassociation. I believe at times we can all step outside of who we are and mutate into other versions of ourselves in order to gain a sense of belonging. I also wanted to maintain the fact that Hasna is a real woman and we will never truly know who she was or how - Dina Amer exactly she felt but the best we can do through a fictional lens is to allow women who come from a similar identity as her to step into her shoes and feel the weight of her experience. The script was written after recording over 300 hours of interviews with Hasna's real family and inner circle. As a "recovering" journalist, the discovery and writing process became my personal redemption.

I had felt the weight of simplifying human lives into headlines to feed diminishing attention spans. But as I spent time with Hasna's family, Youssef, her brother, said to me: "Very simply, if you want to know why my sister made [the choices she made], it comes down to one thing: it's this woman's fault." And he pointed to his mother. I was stunned because I instantly understood there is a layer to this complicated story that's just about a dysfunctional family.

The film is an invitation to look before and behind the headlines, not for absolute truths or permanent answers, but an insistence on lifting the veils and beginning the conversations that conceal our shared humanity. There are no monsters to slay if we dare to search, discover and unleash the power and promise of sisterhood—the gift Hasna cherished and the only home she ever had.

## DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY



## Dina Amer (Writer, Producer, and Director)

Dina Amer is an award-winning filmmaker and journalist. She helped produce the Oscarnominated and Emmy awardwinning documentary The Square, where the Egyptian Revolution was chronicled from the frontlines. Growing up between the US and Egypt, her work has focused on sharing nuanced, human stories with a global audience.

Previous to her film work, Dina was Her written work has a celebrated journalist. She was an on-air correspondent for VICE, including The Black Market Series, where she uncovered the human debut. trafficking of Syrian refugees and explored the underground economy of illegal Egypt-Gaza tunnels.

published in The New York Times, CNN, and The Huffington Post. You Resemble Me is her directorial



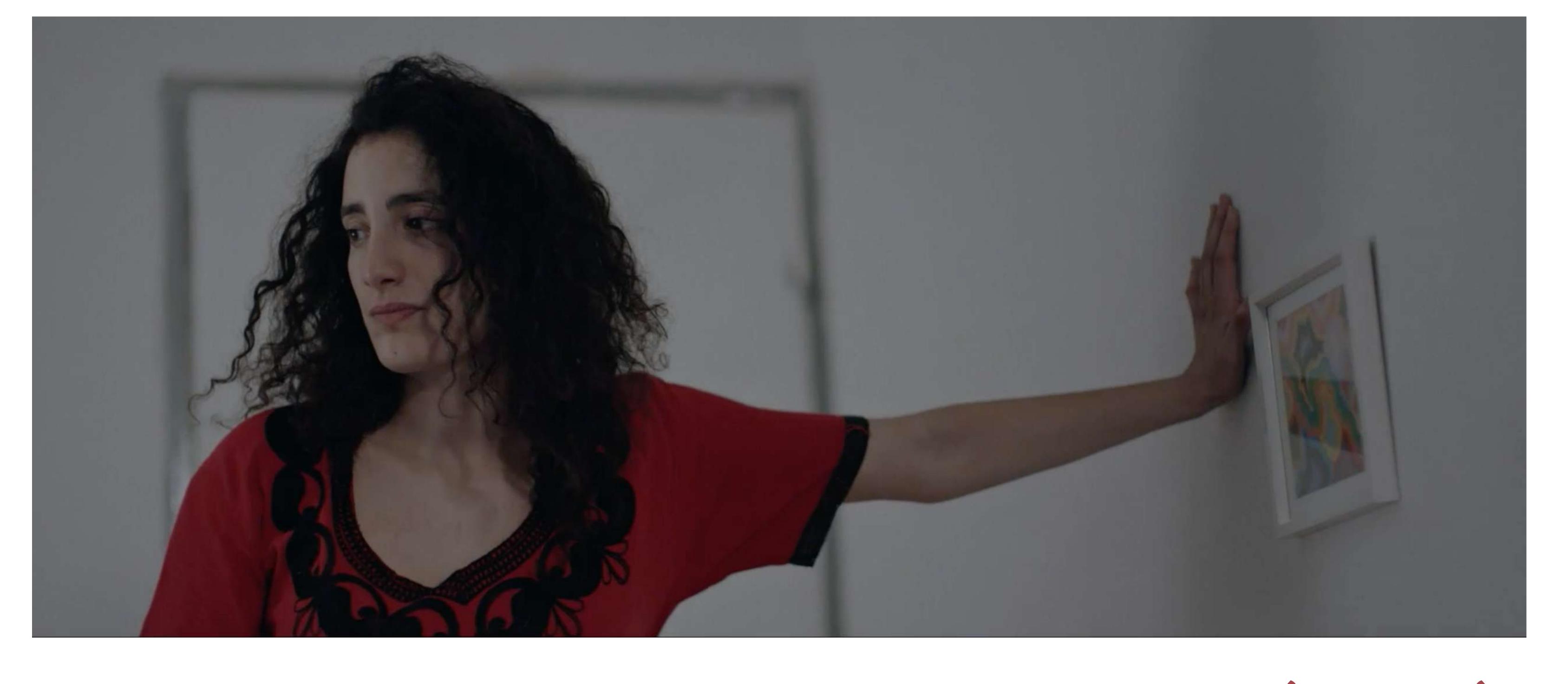


## Ilonna (Mariam) and Lorenza Grimaudo (Hasna)

move the family to the Paris You Resemble Me. Dina Amer Venice Film Festival. region. Djino paved the way for fell in love with Lorenza and his little sisters — hip-hop Ilonna, two sisters who had dancer, child model, and actor, obviously never taken acting he became a role model for lessons but who exuded such Lorenza and Ilonna. However, in strength and closeness that the

April of 2018, devastating news director wanted to see them

Ilonna and Lorenza Grimaudo, hit the family — their father had again. Lorenza, Illona and Djino along with their older brother passed away at the age of 30. were cast in You Resemble Me, Djino, are true artists. Originally This ordeal would come to their first feature film, in which from Marseille, it was in August strengthen and solidify the Lorenza and Ilonna have leading 2017 that their mother, Nessrine bonds of the family. One year roles. The determination but also Boukmiche, who sensed early on later, their mother sent her three the values and fundamental an artistic energy revolving children's applications in principles deep within this around her children, decided to response to the casting call for family, now leads them to the

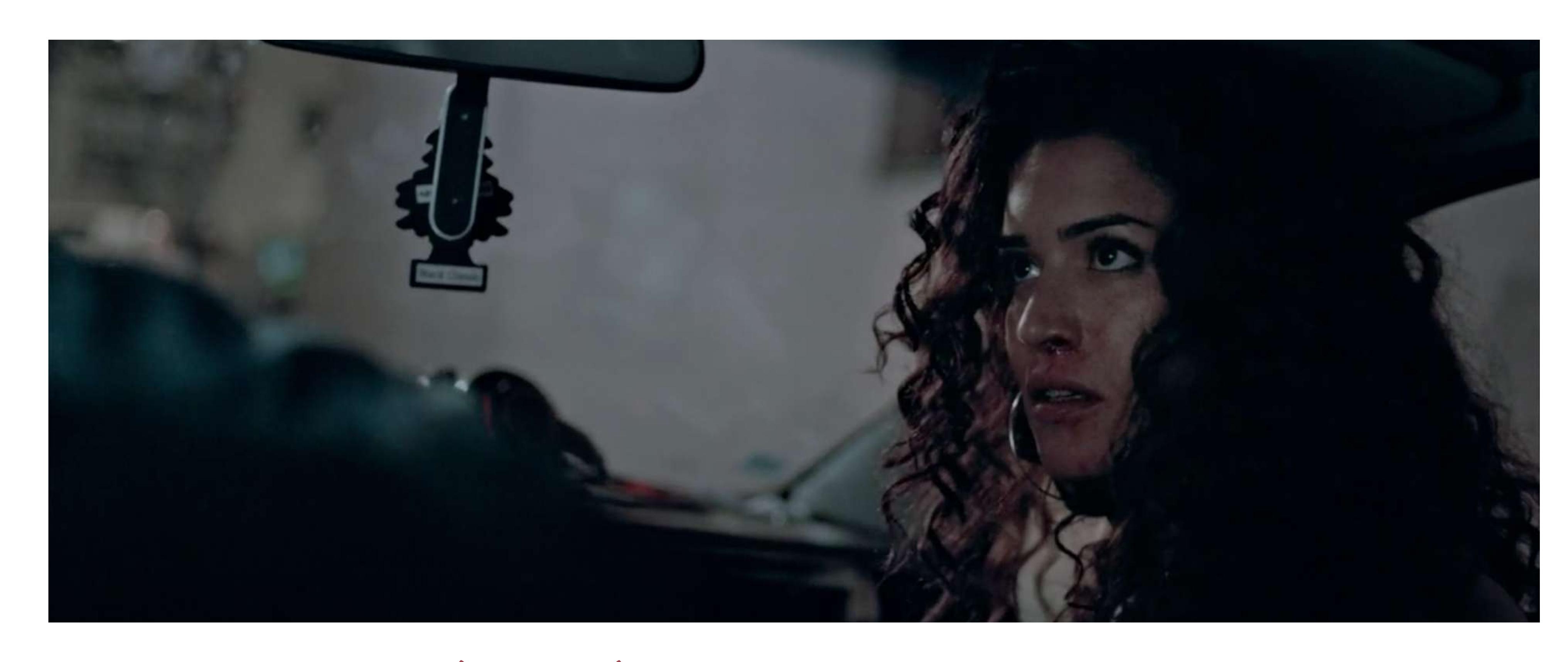


## Mouna Soualem (Hasna)

since the age of 11, having cinema at the University of Paris residence at The Massachusetts appeared in such films as: 8, where she made her foray into Steven Spielberg's Munich theatre, starring in lead roles She recently wrapped rehearsals (2006), Amos Gitai's Later You such as Nina in "The Seagull" on a dance show, set to premiere Will Understand (2008), Hiam directed by Hélène Babu. She in 2022, called "Broken Theater" Abbass's Inheritance (2012), was then accepted into the directed by Bobbi Jene Smith Hafsia Herzi's **You Deserve A** Gabriel Fauré Conservatory in and created at the La MaMa Lover (2019), and Boaz Yakin's Paris 5 and later moved to New Experimental Theater Club in Aviva (2020). Up next, she will York where she studied at the New York. play the female lead in the renowned Stella Adler Studio of Disney+ series, Oussekine, by Acting. A multi-faceted artist, director French Chevrollier.

Mouna Soualem has been acting Mouna earned a degree in In 2020, she was an artist-in-Antoine Mouna showcased a creative play at the 2018 Avignon Festival Section OFF in France.

Museum of Contemporary Art.



## Sabrina Ouazani (Hasna)

Sabrina Ouazani started acting at age 13 in the film **L'Esquive**, for which she was nominated as Most Promising Young Actress at the 2002 César awards.

She performed in multiple TV productions in France before acting in auteur films such as Adieu Gary by Nassim Amaouch – winner of the International Critics' Week Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival – Des hommes et des dieux by Xavier Beauvois, La Source des Femmes by Radu Mihaileanu, and, last but not least, the award-winning Iranian film Le Passé, directed by Asghar Farhadi.

In 2013, Sabrina won the Jutra Award for Best Actress for the role of Rand in **Inch'Allah**, playing a young pregnant Palestinian who befriends a Quebec doctor named Chloe.

In 2014, she played the lead role of Nawel in Abd Al Malik's feature film **Qu'Allah bénisse la France**. Simultaneously, she acted in various French comedies – performing, with among others, Omar Sy, Éric Judor and Franck Gastambide in the hit comedy **Pattaya** – and in Christophe Barratier's thriller **L'Outsider**.

In 2017, she was the female lead in the film **Ouvert la Nuit** by Edouard Baer, costarring Edouard Baer, and Audrey Tautou, and dubbed the voice of Alexandra in the animated movie **Sahara** by Pierre Coré. A year later, she had the lead role in the feature film **Break**, directed by Marc Fouchard, and also in **Enchantées** by Safia Azzedine. On TV, she co-starred with Kevin Azaïs in **Illettré** by Jean-Pierre Améris. The same year, Sabrina directed her first short film, **On va Manquer**, for the 2018 Talent Cannes Adami.

Later, she performed in Mohamed Hamidi's film **Jusqu'ici tout va** bien co- starring Gilles Lellouche and Malik Bentalha.

In 2019, she acted in Mohamed Hamidi's feature Une belle équipe and the French Netflix series Plan Coeur season 2. In addition, Sabrina acted in Ismaël Ferroukhi's feature Mica and the French series Prière d'enquêter.

She also performed on stage in the play **Les Justes**, a musical tragedy staged by Abd Al Malik and adapted from Albert Camus's original play.

Following her stage work, Sabrina dubbed the voice of Shenzi in The Lion King.

In 2020, she was awarded the lead role in the film **Kung Fu Zohra** of Mabrouk El Mechri. She also played an important character in **Validé**, a successful Canal Plus TV series.

Most recently, in 2021, Sabrina played the main role in Jean Pierre Ameris' latest film, Les Folies Fermières, alongside Alban Ivanov.





## Q&A WITH DIRECTOR DINA AMER

#### How did the making of You Resemble Me begin?

I came to France while working for VICE as a journalist on Nov. 14, 2015, a day after the Paris attacks. They were the deadliest attacks to happen on French soil in modern history. The city was in a state of panic and trauma, the devastation and fear pulsing through it. At the time, the mastermind of the attacks was thought to be in Syria. Then suddenly, we were alerted by the media that he was in fact not in Syria, but Saint-Denis, working-class neighborhood outside of Paris. As I rushed there, a bomb went off.

reported on-air for VICE News, along with every other news outlet, that Hasna was the first female suicide bomber in Europe.

Hasna's profile didn't match that of a typical around, sometimes dealing drugs, living a seen by some as imposing your beliefs. free lifestyle... Within 10 months, this Shortly after that November day, a cell willing to die for ISIS.

throughout Paris — they felt like Hasna had understanding Islam, had committed this

horrendous act that would threaten their position in France as visibly Muslim French women. That position is already incredibly difficult — if you wear a headscarf, you get jihadist. She was known as the "cowgirl of different employment opportunities; if you the 'hood" — remembered as frolicking go to pick up your child at school, you are

woman transformed from the cowgirl to a phone video of the explosion surfaced and niqab-wearing "suicide bomber" who was went viral. Hasna could be heard screaming at the top of her lungs from the balcony: remember the anxiety of veiled women "Please help! Let me jump! I want to leave!" And suddenly the story shifted; her role in the attacks became blurred. She was no longer the first female suicide bomber in

too late. Hasna's desperate cries for help haunted me. I knew I had to find her family and understand the truth of who she was and how she had arrived there. I eventually found myself knocking on Hasna's intact. We were all speechless, soaking in mother's door. A man opened it. There was the gravity of what we were about to see. a familiar glint in his eyes — we broke into Egyptian dialect. I told him I was looking for Hasna's mom. He said she was his girlfriend. Hasna's mother kept me waiting ripped jeans, had their nails done, with at that door for more than 30 minutes. She eventually let me in and told me that I reminded her of Hasna. She showed me a picture of her daughter as a child. It broke The room was dead silent. Suddenly my heart. The sensationalized headline that I was a part of creating was actually about of her cousin and mastermind of the this woman, who was once this innocent girl. I wanted to understand how that little girl became "Europe's first female suicide bomber."

#### Tell us more about your interactions with Hasna's family and how they played into the development of the story.

of immediate judgement. I believe she saw that I was a practicing Muslim and had understand what might have led someone to go down such a destructive path. The next week, Hasna's mother invited me to accompany her to the morgue and see Hasna's body.

I remember when we were waiting to see wanted out at the final moment, but it was the body. The coroner — a white French woman dripping in diamonds — was describing to us what we were about to witness. She said that due to the impact of this explosion, Hasna's body was not fully Hasna's mother was there, as was Hasna's sister Mariam, and a few of Hasna's friends - girls from the 'hood who were wearing weaves in their hair. And they were tough. They were most definitely not the image of typical Muslim women.

Mariam interjected, asking where the body attacks, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, was. "I would like you to find his body and feed it to pigs," she said, "because he is a monster who killed 130 people and brainwashed my sister." She took out her iPhone, swiping through photos of Hasna with her cowboy hat on — "this is my sister." The morgue I think Hasna's mother saw my sincerity in was filled with bodies of people who were wanting to understand, outside of a place killed at the hands of this very family. The coroner politely responded: "We don't judge here; we treat all bodies with respect for the religion. I wasn't coming in respect." We went to see Hasna. She was to vilify Islam; I was coming in to enclosed behind glass, as if she was a mummy at the Louvre — or evidence. Mariam was up against the glass, crying hysterically. Hasna's mother kept a distance and was making loud incantations

state of shock, probably asking herself: show." "are we even in France right now?" Hasna's It became clear to me that this was all turned around and grabbed Mariam's hand adults in the worst way possible. and said: "You know you really shouldn't How did you know you had to write a wear nail polish — it's from the devil." Mariam stopped crying and looked at her mother. In a moment of what appeared to be clarity in the midst of such a surreal experience, she said, "There was nothing Hasna felt they were the same, that they wrong with Hasna. The only thing that was were like twins. And everything was wrong with her is that she was born into fractured around them growing up. Their this fucked up family. You are fucked up mother was mentally ill, they were living in and I want to stay as far away from you as extreme poverty, they had to beg on the possible." I rode on the Metro with the street for food. And yet they had each mother back to her apartment. Youssef, other. So there was some joy. But when Hasna's brother, came home from his job they were separated, even though they at Starbucks and said: "very simply, if you begged to stay together, I felt that's when want to know why my sister made this their identities were fragmented. They lost horrible choice, it comes down to one themselves. They were overloaded with thing: it's this woman's fault," and he mixed messages — of what is civilized and pointed to his mother. I was stunned what is sinful. And for me, I just fell in love because I instantly understood — this is with them as children — and the stories not a story about terrorism. This is a story Mariam would tell me. I felt such empathy about a dysfunctional family. That is a for them that I knew the pain of their universal lens that I think a lot of people separation was going to be more deeply could relate to. Then to hear Hasna's felt by the audience through a dramatic mother's response: "All parents beat their film versus a documentary. Most of all, the kids, no? At least I wasn't like your cousin's reason that I made a narrative film was I mother, (the mother of Abaaoud, the wanted the audience to feel what it feels mastermind of the attacks) "... his mother like to be in Hasna's skin. I also felt it used to beat him so hard that he couldn't needed to be narrative because we have

of prayer in Arabic. The coroner was in a go to school, because the bruises would

friends were helping Mariam down the rooted in traumatic childhoods — broken stairs. She was completely knocked out by children who are not attended to will grab the sight of her sister. Hasna's mother our attention down the line as broken

## fictional script based on a true narrative to tell Hasna's story?

I understood that this was a story about sisterhood — at one point in their lives, nuanced and human lens.

go to school, because the bruises who

previously humanized the villains of our

times through fiction filmmaking — Hitler,

sociopaths of different sorts, etc., and yet

here I felt like there was some kind of red

line imposed. You couldn't humanize a

brown "terrorist" — that was too

insensitive. And I was thinking, no, I've

covered this story through the accepted

medium of the news and it feels surface

level and like it's actually inspiring people

to commit more attacks. I'd rather talk

about the deeper issues, the roots of why

organization like ISIS, through a medium

like film that allows us as an audience to

explore this story through a complex,

someone gets

enchanted by

#### What was the process like for you in making this film?

It was important for me to film with Mariam, Hasna's family, and everyone who knew Hasna that I could get access to, so I could get a fuller picture of who Hasna was. With over 360 hours of interview footage, I wrote our script with my incredibly talented co-writer Omar Mullick. We watched hours of my footage and sculpted a script that felt true to all of my research materials. The authenticity of the storytelling was supremely important to me because I knew how sensitive this story was and that is why it took six years to get right.

We were always close to Hasna somehow in the making of this film. We had people show up to the casting, not knowing exactly what the film was about, who were thrown when told it was about Hasna, because they knew her from the neighborhood. The fact that they were going to now act in a fictional film about her was both haunting and meaningful to them.

We filmed in the neighborhood she grew up in — the girls were living out her childhood, running through the very same streets the real Mariam and Hasna would chase each other down and play in. We were deeply entrenched in her imprint on this earth while filming.





## style utilized in the making of YOU RESEMBLE ME?

truly put themselves in her shoes and see the world through her eyes.

How did you go about casting for the different roles in the film?

What is the essence of the filmmaking The casting process was pretty wild; we primarily utilized street casting. I remember a French producer saying to me that it was We wanted to capture something that felt going to take months to find the right child as intimate and real as possible. Omar and actors, that it was going to be incredibly I spent a lot of time discussing and crafting difficult. Thankfully I found our incredible how the camera could really allow the young actresses, Lorenza and Ilonna audience to almost become a part of Grimaudo, on the very first day of the Mariam and Hasna and how it could be casting. They were the last to show up and I used as an extension of their energy and knew instantly they were my girls. The fact freedom. I wanted the camera to be so that they were really sisters and were wild, close to Hasna that the audience could free, and untrained was perfect. Our rehearsal process was crucial to the film. We spent weeks rehearsing scenes, at times on location, and I think that really helped the girls embody the characters more fully.

Since they are sisters who are Muslim and French, I recognized in them some of the same themes and struggles that are prevalent in the film around identity and belonging. They are immensely talented and yet struggled to get acting work in Paris because agencies were looking for blonde white girls, which is maddening to me. They lost their father a year or so before we started filming and I feel a lot of the vulnerability and power of their performance comes from that loss. Their mother, Nessrine, took a real chance on me and trusted me to protect their girls in this film. It was a huge act of faith for her to allow her daughters to step into the shoes of Hasna and Mariam. Many French producers refused

be dealt with at a root level.

## using one actress?

falsely reported Hasna as the first female Hasna to life. suicide bomber in Europe. Also, at For me, Sabrina Ouazani represents an different points in the wake of the aspect of Hasna that Hasna's friends call explosion, three different French Muslim "La Vache Qui Rit," or the Laughing Cow, a women were identified in the media as the beloved mascot from a famous French bomber. When I discovered that there was cheese commercial. She is a big misinformation spreading across all the personality with a bombastic laugh who main media outlets reporting Hasna's instantly takes over any room with her identity at various times as three different infectious energy. She is the Hasna who is women, I decided to flip their error and effortlessly charming, can lie through her allow three different women to step into teeth, and will hustle her way through Hasna's shoes. Each gives us a glimpse anything to survive. Sabrina grew up in into the women she had tried to become. Even more so, I felt that this was not a story about terrorism, but a story about Hasna had to contend with. During long, Hasna being a multi-faceted woman intense shoots, she would say things like ultimately looking for something we all seek: to feel a sense of belonging and home. The choice of casting three women to portray Hasna took on a deeper

to work with me because they thought it resonance when I learned just how was too politically sensitive to portray fragmented the real Hasna was. I really Hasna as a child, claiming it would elicit wanted this film to communicate that too much sympathy. Justifying her actions disassociation and how we as adults can has never been my intention. My intention leave our bodies and shapeshift to survive has always been to experience her when there is an overwhelming amount of complicated humanity — we have no trauma that is imprinted on us as children. choice but to really try and understand it I knew Mouna Soualem from when I was because this issue of radicalization must doing research after the Charlie Hebdo attacks. She was still in acting school at Can you share your thoughts on the choice the time. We reconnected years later in to present three adult Hasna's versus just New York in a chance meeting. I literally ran into her on my block and I noticed in As a former journalist, I had also her an undeniable talent and vulnerability contributed to the media machine that that would make her perfect to bring

> similar neighborhoods as Hasna and understood so many of the forces that "we are doing this for Hasna so people can understand how this happens and so we can heal as a community." I was always so moved by her sense of duty in the process.



As for my acting role in the film, my journey with This technology became the perfect tool to allow the Hasna's real family was rooted in my resemblance to audience to witness Hasna's fractured personality Hasna. I felt a very strong connection to her, and struggle with her identity. It also became a especially in her idealism and desire to be good commentary on how we present ourselves differently through Islam. I understood that desire deeply and on social media and can present ourselves as felt I needed to embody that aspect of her which was someone else to be liked or fit in. And, finally, it really the birthing ground for the title You Resemble reflected that this film is about a real woman and, Me. Everyone who was cast in this film acted from a even with six years of research, we will never truly place of deep courage and duty. It was not an easy thing to find someone to play Abdelhamid Abbaoud, Hasna's cousin and the mastermind of the attacks. that sense, she resembles us collectively because Just about every actor we approached backed out in she could be any woman and any person. For me, her fear it would destroy their career and put them in fractured personality was the essential reason why personal danger. Alexandre Gonin is one of the finest she became an ISIS fangirl; she was thirsting for actors I came across in Paris. I was fortunate to someone to come and unify her trauma-fueled witness his talent on the stage while he was multiplicity and give her a singular direction and performing theater and I instantly knew his identity. Our incredible deepfake artist, Fernando, seductive charm and intensity was perfect for the allowed us to witness her instability and dissociative role. How did Deepfake technology serve as a tool tendencies through his artistry. to illustrate Hasna's dissociation and identity fracture?

know who she fully was or what was in her heart. A mystery of who she is must always remain — and in

#### Main crew

Director Dina Amer

Producers Dina Amer

> Karim Amer Elizabeth Woodward

Screenwriters Dina Amer

Omar Mullick

Omar Mullick Cinematography

Editing Keiko Deguchi, A.C.E.

Jake Roberts, A.C.E.

Carolina Santana Sound

Nicolas Becker

Tom Paul

Music Saunder Jurriaans

Danny Bensi

Executive producers Spike Lee

Spike Jonze Alma Har'el Riz Ahmed Natalie Farrey Suroosh Alvi Danny Gabai Abigail E. Disney Angie Wang Hala Mnaymneh Marni Grossman

Geralyn Dreyfous Charles de Rosen Regina K. Scully Karim Amer

Jamie Wolf

#### Main cast

Child Hasna Lorenza Grimaudo

Child Mariam Ilonna Grimaudo

Adult Hasna 1 Mouna Soualem

Adult Hasna 2 Sabrina Ouazani

Adult Hasna 3 Dina Amer

Amina Sana Sri

Abdelhamid Alexandre Gonin

#### With the participation of

Grégoire Colin Zinedine Soualem



