

A film by Amir Zargara

VITAL

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Mahtab Servati

(There Is No Evil – Berlinale Golden Bear 2020)

Reza Akhlaghirad

(The Seed of the Sacred Fig – Cannes Jury Special Prize 2024)

Hossein Soleimani

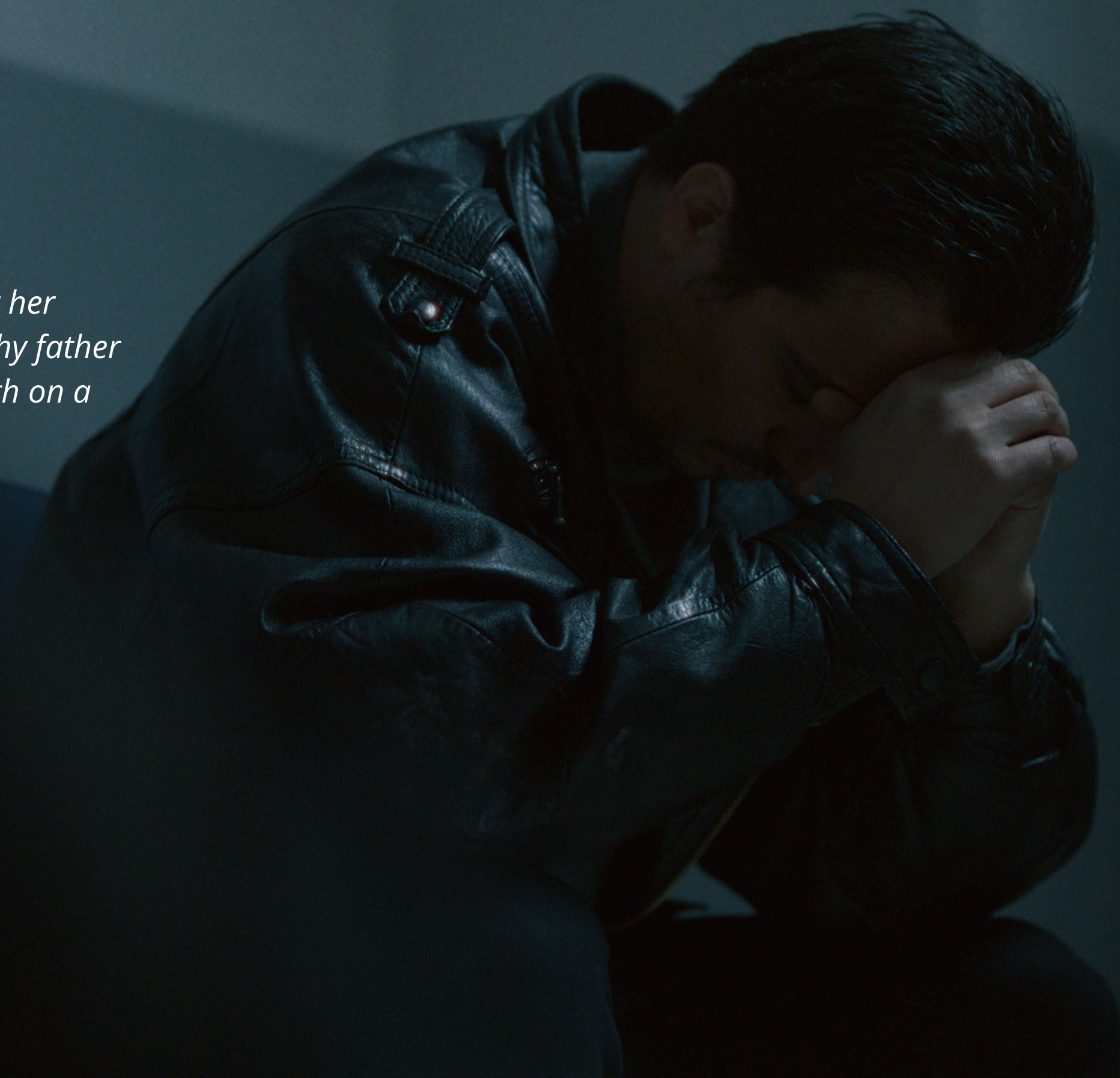
(Terrestrial Verses – Cannes Un Certain Regard Nominee 2023)

Fiction | Short Film | 2025 | 14 min
Canada, Iran, Turkey | Farsi with English subtitles
Color | 1.66:1 | DCP | 5.1, Stereo

In Iran, a desperate mother sells her own organs to pay for her daughter's cancer treatment, while in the United States, a wealthy father risks everything to find a heart for his ailing child—setting both on a path where love demands the unthinkable.

[Trailer](#) | [Website](#) | [Posters](#) | [Stills](#) | [BTS](#)

[IMDB](#) | [Letterboxd](#) | [Instagram](#)



Amir Zargara

Writer, Director, Producer

Amir Zargara is an award-winning Iranian-Canadian writer and director, whose unique perspective is shaped by the cultural mosaic of Iran and Canada. His journey, characterized by the resilience of an immigrant and the challenges of living with a stutter, deeply influences his approach to filmmaking. An alumnus of prestigious programs at Berlinale, TIFF, Busan, Red Sea, Zurich, Film Independent, and Reykjavik, he explores the moral complexities individuals face in his films.

His short films VITAL and A GOOD DAY WILL COME qualified for the Oscars and have received over 100 awards and mentions across more than 200 film festivals worldwide. Amir's screenplays have garnered praise from top industry competitions, including the Academy's Nicholl Fellowship, The Black List, Austin Film Festival, and Slamdance.

[Director Headshot](#)





Director's Statement

VITAL began with a memory from my childhood in Iran. I remember learning that a family friend was trying to buy a kidney for his mother. At that age, I couldn't fully understand what it meant, but the idea that an organ could become part of a financial transaction to save someone you love stayed with me.

Iran is the only country in the world where the sale of organs—more specifically kidneys—is legal, while in the United States, organ sales are prohibited and tens of thousands of people remain on transplant waiting lists. Having spent much of my life between Iran and North America, I became fascinated by how these two very different systems confront the same fundamental problem: there are more people in need of organs than there are organs available. I wanted VITAL to explore the difficult moral choices that emerge when love, survival, economics, and scarcity collide.

The organ trade in VITAL also became a metaphor for my complicated relationship with Iran. Although I left the country years ago, I continue to “harvest” its memories, contradictions, and stories for my filmmaking. Iran is no longer where I live, but it remains deeply connected to how I see the world, the stories I'm drawn to, and the filmmaker I have become.

There are no heroes or villains in this story, only people trying to protect the ones they love within circumstances that test the limits of what they believe is right. Through these two parents, I wanted to explore how socioeconomic realities can shape our moral choices, and how differently any of us might act when the life of someone we love is at stake.

Mahtab Servati

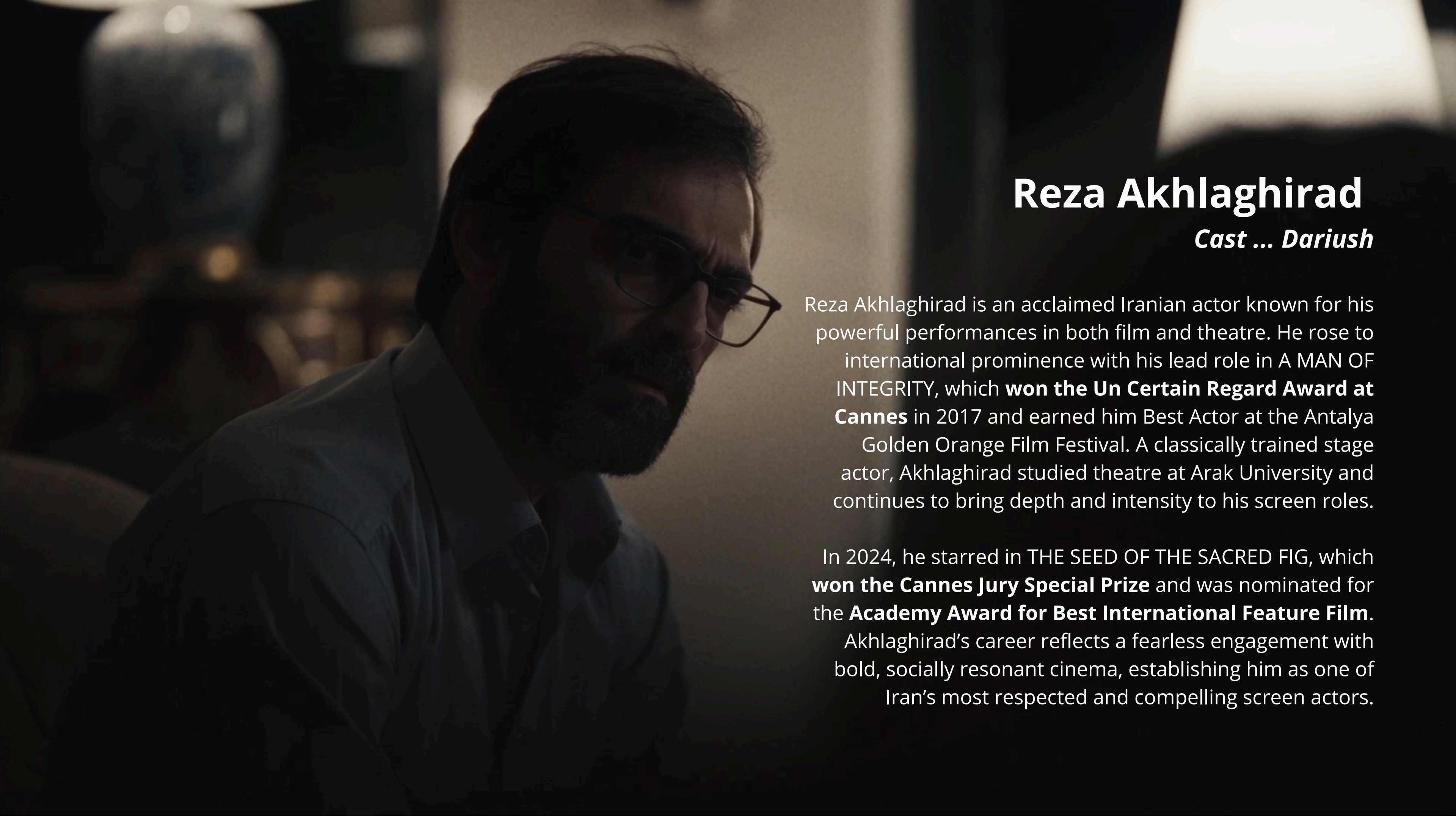
Cast ... Fereshteh

Mahtab Servati is an acclaimed Iranian actress known for her powerful and versatile performances across film, television, and theatre. She gained international recognition for her role in **THERE IS NO EVIL (2020), winner of the Golden Bear at the 70th Berlin International Film Festival**. Domestically, she became a household name with her lead performance in **ONCE UPON A TIME IN IRAN**, which won Best Series at the 2022 Hafez Awards.

Trained on the stage, Servati made her screen debut in **BORN IN 1987 (2016)**, a Best Feature nominee at the 34th Fajr Film Festival, and has since moved fluidly between mediums.

Her meticulous character work continues to garner acclaim: in 2025 she was nominated for Best Actress (Theatre) at the Hafez Awards for **NEW JERSEY**. With each role, Servati further solidifies her standing as one of Iran's most dynamic and compelling performers.





Reza Akhlaghirad

Cast ... Dariush

Reza Akhlaghirad is an acclaimed Iranian actor known for his powerful performances in both film and theatre. He rose to international prominence with his lead role in *A MAN OF INTEGRITY*, which **won the Un Certain Regard Award at Cannes** in 2017 and earned him Best Actor at the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival. A classically trained stage actor, Akhlaghirad studied theatre at Arak University and continues to bring depth and intensity to his screen roles.

In 2024, he starred in *THE SEED OF THE SACRED FIG*, which **won the Cannes Jury Special Prize** and was nominated for the **Academy Award for Best International Feature Film**.

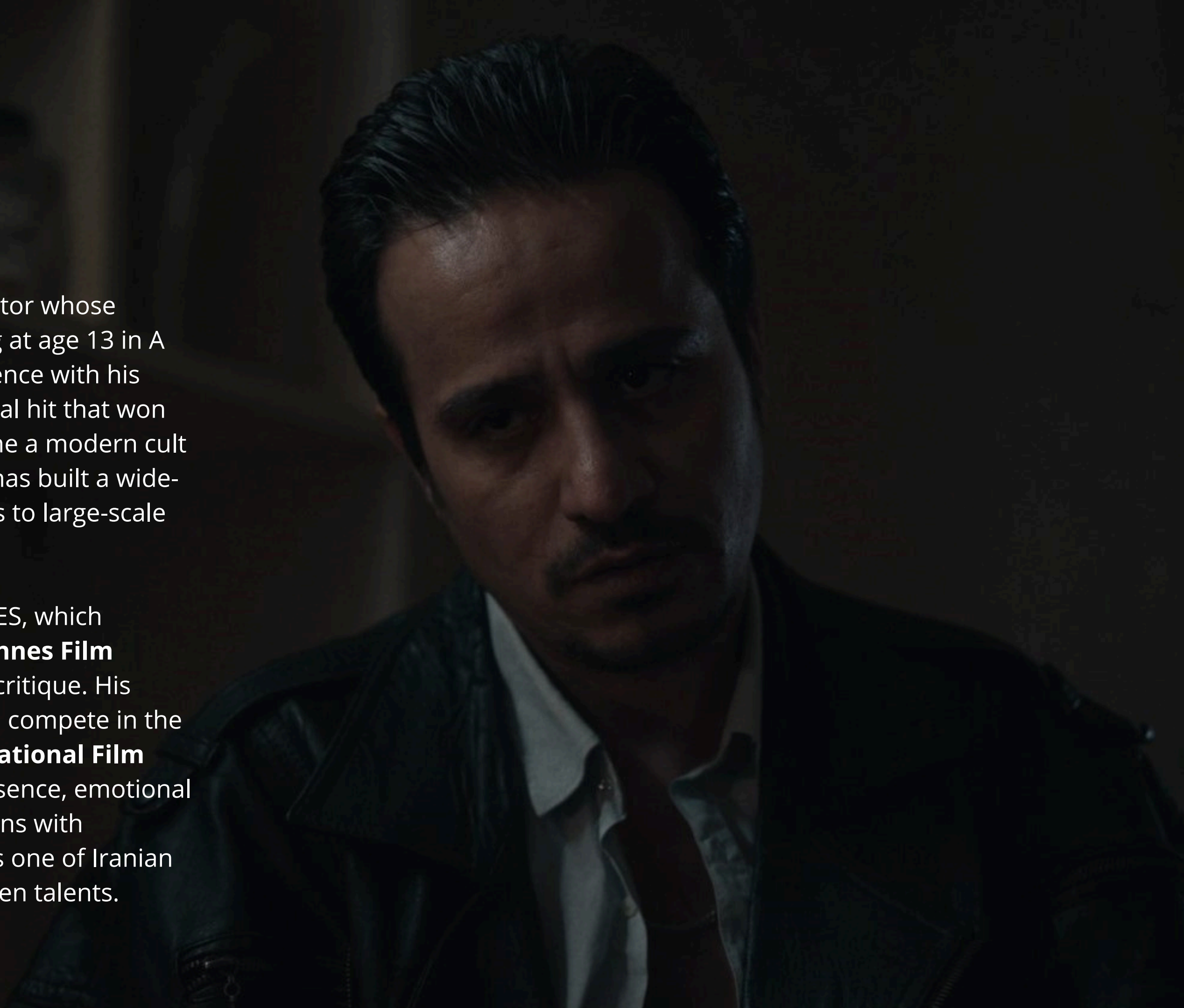
Akhlaghirad's career reflects a fearless engagement with bold, socially resonant cinema, establishing him as one of Iran's most respected and compelling screen actors.

Hossein Soleimani

Cast ... Shaheen

Hossein Soleimani is a celebrated Iranian actor whose career spans over 25 years. He began acting at age 13 in *A MOTHER'S LOVE* (1998) and rose to prominence with his breakout role in *THE LIZARD* (2004), a satirical hit that won Best Film at the Fajr Film Festival and became a modern cult classic. Known for his versatility, Soleimani has built a wide-ranging body of work, from intimate dramas to large-scale war epics.

In 2023, he co-starred in *TERRESTRIAL VERSES*, which premiered in **Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival** and was praised for its bold social critique. His latest feature film, *DIVINE COMEDY*, is set to compete in the Orizzonti section of the **2025 Venice International Film Festival**. Recognized for his naturalistic presence, emotional depth, and ability to portray everyday Iranians with authenticity and warmth, Soleimani remains one of Iranian cinema's most distinctive and enduring screen talents.



Cast & Crew

Mahtab Servati ... Fereshteh

(THERE IS NO EVIL – Berlinale Golden Bear 2020)

Reza Akhlaghirad ... Dariush

(THE SEED OF THE SACRED FIG – Cannes Jury Special Prize 2024)

Hossein Soleimani ... Shaheen

(TERRESTRIAL VERSES – Cannes Un Certain Regard Nominee 2023)

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Writer (Story by), Director, Producer: Amir Zargara

Writer (Story by, Written by): Gabe Berry

Producers: Sara Nasrabadi, Iman Tahsin

(A BIT OF LIGHT - Venice Official Competition 2026)

Executive Producer: Asa Kazerani, Scott Aharoni

Director of Photography: Jelan Maxwell

Composer: Kamyar Behbahani

Editor: Iman Tahsin

Sound Designer, Sound Mixer: Amir Mohabbati

Production Sound Mixer: Sara Nasrabadi

Art Directors: Elem Tilev, Sepideh Fathi

Costume Designer: Alma Ghoshtasb

Hair & Make up: Surur Kheyrandishfard

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