

JOONAM

جونام

*World Premiere in the U.S. Documentary Competition Section
at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival*



Directed, Edited, and Cinematography by **Sierra Urich**
Featuring **Behjat Samimi, Mitra Samimi-Urich, and Sierra Urich**
Produced by **Keith Wilson** (*I Didn't See You There*) and **Sierra Urich**
Supervising Editor **Maya Daisy Hawke**
Associate Produced by **Sasha Leitmann**

RT: 100 minutes

US Publicity Contacts

Falco Ink. | 212-445-7100

Kirsten Nolan, KirstenNolan@falcoink.com

Caroline Salvaggio, CarolineSalvaggio@falcoink.com

Sales Contacts

Cinetic Media

Jason Jason Ishikawa, jason@cineticmedia.com

Alexis Galfas, alexisg@cineticmedia.com

Zach Magid, zach@cineticmedia.com

LOG LINE

Spurred by a provocative family memory and a lifetime of separation from the country her mother left behind, a young filmmaker delves into her mother and grandmother's complicated pasts, and her own fractured Iranian identity.

SYNOPSIS

Filmmaker Sierra Urich grew up in rural Vermont, a place and an upbringing far removed from Iran, the homeland of her mother, Mitra, and grandmother, Behjat. Only knowing Iran through family stories, food, and holidays, and with the prospect of travel to the country a seemingly impossible dream, she embarks on a personal quest to make sense of her fractured Iranian identity. Navigating barriers of language and culture (not to mention the complications of geopolitical conflict and displacement), Sierra turns to Mitra and Behjat to construct a deeply moving and sometimes disarmingly funny portrait of three generations of women and their complex relationship to an Iran of the past.

Named for a Farsi term of endearment, Joonam is infused with humor and heart like only a film about family could be. Interrogating family history and memory, including her grandmother's experiences as a preteen bride and her mother's rebellious teenage years during the Iranian Revolution, Sierra Urich constructs a rich, personal film that poignantly reflects the experiences of the Iranian diasporic community and speaks to anyone affected by the dislocation that accompanies immigration.

FILM PARTICIPANTS & FAMILY BACKGROUND

Mitra Samimi-Urich left for college in 1979 (right before the 1979 Islamic Revolution and before knowing that she wouldn't be able to return). Behjat Samimi was finally allowed to leave Iran in the 1990s (with the intention to be with her children). Mitra and Behjat did not flee immediately following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, nor were they considered refugees.



SIERRA URICH

Sierra Urich grew up in a small town nestled in the foothills of Vermont's Green Mountains. Raised by her Persian mother and American-born father, she grew up speaking English (never learning her mother's native language.) Her connection to her Iranian identity was limited to food, holidays, and old family photographs. She was four years old when she met her grandparents for the first time. She has never been to Iran.



MITRA SAMIMI-URICH

Mitra Samimi-Urich, came to the United States in 1979 to attend college shortly after the Shah was ousted from power during the Iranian Revolution. Two months into her studies, the Islamic Republic came to power, effectively preventing Mitra from returning to Iran. She would not see her parents again for sixteen years. To this day she has not returned to Iran since leaving as a young woman.



BEHJAT SAMIMI

Behjat Samimi (1932-2022) was born in Ardabil, Iran. At age twelve she met a young soldier, who she would marry two years later. After raising her children in the city of Isfahan, she retired to the countryside on a small farm with her husband (who the family lovingly called Papa). In the years after the 1979 Revolution, Behjat and Papa attempted to reunite with their children and grandchildren in the United States, but were prevented from doing so by the Islamic Republic for sixteen years.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"We can't go to Iran, it's too dangerous. Maybe one day the political situation will get better."

As a child I took this family refrain at face value. Growing up in rural Vermont in an English-speaking household, my mother's memories were the only window I had to understand my cultural identity. Visiting Iran was never on the table, and because of that, I grew up without much connection to it. My father was American, my friends were American, and I was American. The fact that my mother was from "Persia" as she preferred me to say, an ancient empire absent from modern maps, was just a fun fact that made me feel exotic and mysterious. But in reality, for me Iran was just food and holidays— anything more was out of reach. *Joonam* was born out of my deep, dormant, and unresolved desire to feel connected to Iran.

Today Iran is on the cusp of another revolution, and this time the fight for freedom is being led by women and girls. These last several months I have been glued to the news and my social media feed, moved by the images of resistance and unimaginable bravery coming out of the country, and heartbroken to witness the horrific crackdown against young people asking for basic human rights. Iranians are fighting not only to liberate a country, but also an entire culture. And for Iranians living in the diaspora, this has seismic implications. The yearning that compelled me to make this film was born from the same profound desire— a longing to inherit more than exile from our families, a longing for home, a longing for our very identities.

ABOUT THE FILM TEAM

SIERRA URICH (Director/ Cinematographer/Editor/Producer/Film Subject)

Sierra Urich is a Persian-American interdisciplinary visual artist and filmmaker based in Vermont. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Illustration and Film from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2013. She was an artist-in-residence at The Banff Centre for the Arts 2017, Sundance Nonfiction Directors Fellow 2018, and Points North Fellow 2018, Firelight Doc Lab Fellow 2021, and Chicken & Egg Eggcelerator Lab Fellow 2022. *Joonam* is her first feature film.

KEITH WILSON (Producer)

Keith Wilson is a producer, director and artist based in Athens, Georgia whose films have screened at Sundance, the Berlinale, Hot Docs, the U.S. National Gallery of Art, documenta14, and the Museum of Modern Art. He is the producer of *I Didn't See You There* (2022) by Reid Davenport, which won the Directing Award for U.S. Documentary at Sundance, the Grand Jury Prize at Full Frame, and was nominated for a Gotham and Film Independent Spirit Award. Keith currently teaches in the Entertainment & Media Studies Department at the University of Georgia, has an MFA in film production from the Radio-TV-Film Department at UT-Austin, and grew up on a cul-de-sac in suburban Atlanta.

MAIDA LYNN (Executive Producer)

Maida Lynn is the founder of Facet, a philanthropic fund that supports creatively ambitious documentary filmmaking. The feature documentary she produced, *PAHOKEE*, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2019. Films she executive produced include Sam Green's live documentary, *A Thousand Thoughts* (Sundance 2017), *The Hottest August* (True/False Film Fest 2019), and *Truth or Consequences* (International Film Festival Rotterdam 2020).

MAYA DAISY HAWKE (Supervising Editor)

Maya Daisy Hawke is an editor and artist whose editing credits include double 2022 Sundance Film Festival Audience award winner *Navalny* (CNN films), *Freedom Fields* (2017), and Werner Herzog's *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*. Her own projects include *Currency of Despair* (2014), *Box of Birds* (2016) and *Unfated Yet*, presented live at Museum of the Moving Image NYC (2020) and Stupeur Narcissique, LACMA (2020). She is co-director (with Joe Bini) of *Little Ethiopia*, a live documentary, performed at the Sundance Film Festival, Museum of the Moving Image NYC's First Look (2019), in London at ICA Frames of Representation (2018) and online at IDFA (2020). She premiered a new live cinema piece, *Capture Mode*, at First Look at Museum of the Moving Image NYC 2021. She works worldwide as an editorial consultant with Rough Cut Service. She was a 2018 Sundance Nonfiction Directors Residency Fellow, an Advisor at the Sundance Edit and Story Lab 2018, an Advisor at the Sundance New Frontiers Story Lab 2019 and 2020, an Advisor to the Sundance Art of Editing Fellowship 2020 and a 2021/22 Sundance Art of Practice fellow.

SASHA LEITMANN (Associate Producer)

Sasha Leitmann is a documentary producer and editor based in the Bay Area. She most recently associate produced *I Didn't See You There* (2022) by Reid Davenport, winner of the Directing Award for US Documentary at Sundance and Grand Jury Prize at Full Frame. She was the associate producer and assistant editor for the National Endowment for the Arts' "Roots of American Culture 2022" series, and

co-produced *The Big Scary "S" Word* (2020), a documentary directed by Yael Bridge about the history and resurgence of socialism in American politics. Sasha has edited union campaign videos for Time of Day Media and previously worked as Production Coordinator at Robert Reich's Inequality Media. She graduated with a BA in Art History from Reed College.

CREDITS

Featuring	Sierra Urich Mitra Samimi-Urich Behjat Samimi Gary Urich Einollah Samimi Anonymous Farsi Tutor 1 Anonymous Farsi Tutor 2 Bebe Venus Junchalong
Directed by	Sierra Urich
Produced by	Keith Wilson Sierra Urich
Executive Produced by	Maida Lynn Ruth Ann Harnisch Bill Harnisch
Cinematography by	Sierra Urich
Edited by	Sierra Urich
Supervising Editor	Maya Daisy Hawke
Associate Produced by	Sasha Leitmann
Consulting Producer	Lisa Remington
Fiscal Sponsor	Women Make Movies
Color	Natacha Ikoli
DI Facility	Nice Dissolve
DI Supervisor	Pierce Varous

Post sound services provided by Gigantic Studios

	Re-recording mixer & Supervising sound editor
Tristan Baylis	
Jesse Peterson	Sound effects editor
Billy Orrico	Dialogue editor
Kevin Wilson	Studio Manager

Foley services provided by Alchemy Post Sound

Supervising Foley Editor	Chris White
Foley Artist	Leslie Bloome
	Shaun Brennan
	Curtis Henderson
Foley Mixer	Ryan Collison
	Connor Nagy
Consulting Editor	Mary Lampson
Additional Editing Consulting	Todd Chandler
	David Teague
	Carla Gutierrez
	Gabriela Pena
	Picho Garcia
	Brian Shevrin
	Fiona Otway
	Esther Hayes
	S & MR
Graphics	David Tecson
Legal	Kondas Law LLC

Translations

Behzad Changalvaie

Zoya Honarmand

Poupeh Missaghi

Pinnacle Infotech

Sareh Imani

Bentlhoda Sobhani

Captioning

International Digital Centre

Distribution & Advisory Services

Cinetic

Public Relations

Falco Ink.

Music

A Forest Fact

Written and Performed by Emile Mosseri

Sleep

Written and Performed by Emile Mosseri

Pioneer

Written and Performed by Emile Mosseri

For the Love

Written and Performed by Emile Mosseri

Sazo Avaz Santour

Composed by Mohammadreza Dastgahdar

Arranged by Jamal Sadat & the Ghoghous Music

Ensemble

Vocals by Vahid Taj

Cactus

Composed by Sam Griffin Owens

Courtesy of Domino Publishing Company of
America, Inc.

Gypsy Moth

Written by Andrew Bird

Published by Muffet Music Co

Loveboat Bossa

Composed by Matt Hirt

Published by Crescent Meadow Music

Courtesy of Pond5

Awesome Journey

Composed by Denis Pavlov

Courtesy of Pond5

Summer Elevator

Composed by Andrea Damiano

Courtesy of Pond5

Rock Blues Guitar

Composed by Carl Schonbeck

Published by Pond5 Publishing Alpha

Courtesy of Pond5

Raftam

Written and Performed by Taraneh Enterprises
Inc.

Performed by Marziah

Published by Taraneh Enterprises Inc.

Special Thanks

Kristin Feeley	David Osit	Simon Kilmurry	Hena Ashraf
Tereza Simikova	Todd Chandler	Rita Baghdadi	Rachel Falcone
Megan Gelstein	Joe Bini	Silvia Castanos	Nesa Azimi
Sean Flynn	Mary Lampson	Estefanía Contreras	Jude Chehab
Ben Fowlie	Devorah Palladino	Jane Wagner	Robie Flores
Marjan Safinia	Esther Hayes	Khaula Malik	Lina Vdovii
Brian Shevrin	Eugene Kolb	Michael Premo	Radu Ciorniciuc
Mom & Dad	Amanda Spain	Esther Hayes	Maricarmen Merino Mora
Leah Giblin	Sara Nodjoumi	Iva Dimitrova	Sabine Fayoux Cantillo
The Samimi Family	Anonymous Farsi Tutor 1	Maya Mumma	Nate Venet
Tuna	Anonymous Farsi Tutor 2	S & MR	Rhiannon M. Kim
S & MR	Venus Junchalong	Rahill Jamalifard	Brian W. Bittner
Lauren Domino	Katy Scoggin	Alex Shevrin Venet	Lynn True
Tadashi Nakamura	Grandma & Grandpa مامانيزرگ و بابابزرگ		

Thanks

Ximena Amescua	Christopher Everett	Hemal Trivedi	Volia Chajkouskaya
Sabaah Folyan	Brittany Shyne	Penelope Falk	Andrea Meditch
Antonia Thornton	Jota Mun	Yuqi Kang	Madeline Gordon
Monika Navarro	Lucila Moctezuma	Contessa Gayles	Ben Kalina
Chloe Walters-Wallace	Judith Helfand	Indira Cato	Jen Schneider
Isabel Castro	Volia Chajkouskaya	Chithra Jeyaram	Paul Gallasch
Nyjia Jones	Jenni Wolfson	Tabitha Jackson	Landon Van Soest
Adam Khalil	Mariana Sanson Martinez	Wellington Bowler	Romin Lee Johnson
Zack Khalil	Iva Dimitrova	Kirsten Johnson	Sara Lafleur-Vetter
Eloise King	Colleen Keegan	Enrique Pedr�za-Botero	Jonathan Klett

Ivan MacDonald	Kevin B. Lee	Dave Drusky	Barbara Ghammashi
Ivy MacDonald	Terry Chang	Ana Verde	David Wilson
Charlotte Cook	Nshira Turkson	Carrie Lozano	Chloé Trayner
Sarah Choi	Bonni Cohen	Maria Clement	Lindsey Arrington
Katrina Sliwka	Lisa Chanoff	Hajnal Molnar-Szakacs	Mary Ganzenmuller
Hannah Faesy	José Rodriguez	Sara Archambault	Josh Penn
Garrett Solomon	Caroline von Kuhn	Genevieve Carmel	Otto Wilson-Balon
Damas Limoge	Justine Nagan	Lyda Kuth	Tim Balon
Milton Tabbot	Brown Girls Doc Mafia	Andy Sarjahani	Anna Smith
Sara Bloem	Shahrazad Changalvaie	Jill Huizenga	Cindy Ji Hye Kim
Pegah Pasalar	Alysa Nahmias	Carey Institute for Global Good	

Made With Support From

Facet

The Harnisch Foundation

Chicken & Egg Eggcelerator Lab

Sundance Institute

Cinereach

Catapult Film Fund

Tribeca All Access

Points North Institute

IFP/HBO New True Stories Funding Initiative

LEF Foundation

Field of Vision

Firelight Media Documentary Lab

American Stories Documentary Fund

This film was supported by a grant from:

Catapult Film Fund

IFP/HBO New True Stories Initiative

Sundance Institute's Completion Fund in partnership with Zions Bank

Copyright 2023, Joonam Film LLC

جو نامز

JOONAM