



Paraiso Production, Dschoint Ventschr Filmproduktion and Eklektik Productions present



# GO HOME

**WITH GOLSHIFTEH FARAHANI**

**A FILM BY JIHANE CHOUAIB**

WITH GOLSHIFTEH FARAHANI, MAXIMILIEN SEWERYN, FRANÇOIS NOUR, MIREILLE MAALOUF, JULIA KASSAR, MOHAMMAD AKIL, WISSAM FARES, NASRI SAYEGH, CHARBEL ISKANDAR / WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JIHANE CHOUAIB / DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY TOMMASO FIORILLI / FILM EDITOR LUDO TROCH / MUSIC BY BÉATRICE WICK AND BACHAR KHALIFÉ / SOUND HENRI MAÏKOFF, BÉATRICE WICK, ALINE GAVROY, EMMANUEL CROSET / SET DESIGNER ZEINA SAAB DE MELERO / COSTUME DESIGNER BEATRICE HARB / FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR GILLES TARAZI / CONTINUITY YANNICK CHARLES / COLOR GRADING JÜRGEN KUPKA / GAFFER PETER DAMMER / PRODUCERS NATHALIE TRAFFORD, SAMIR, MARIE BESSON / ASSOCIATE PRODUCER PIERRE SARRAF / LINE PRODUCER MARIANNE KATRA / WITH THE SUPPORT OF CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE / EURIMAGES / L'OFFICE FÉDÉRAL DE LA CULTURE SUISSE, ZÜRCHER FILMSTIFTUNG, CENTRE DU CINÉMA ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL DE LA FÉDÉRATION WALLONIE-BRUXELLES ET DE VOO / PROCIREP ET DE L'ANGÔA / DOHA FILM INSTITUTE / IN COPRODUCTION WITH RTS RADIO TÉLÉVISION SUISSE, SRG, SSR / ENJAZZ - A DUBAI FILM MARKET INITIATIVE / PROXIMUS



# GO HOME

**Film by Jihane Chouaib**

98 min

France / Switzerland / Belgium / Lebanon

French / Arabic / English

**Starring Golshifteh Farahani**

## **Sales**

Nathalie Trafford  
PARAÍSO  
78 rue Orfila  
75020 Paris  
info@paraisoproduction.fr  
nathalie@paraisoproduction.fr  
+33 1 43 15 91 91

## **Press**

Florence Alexandre  
ANYWAYS  
91 rue du Faubourg St-Denis  
75010 PARIS  
florence@anyways.fr  
+33 1 48 24 12 91



## SYNOPSIS

Nada is going home. Or at least she wants to.

When she comes back to Lebanon, she realizes she's a foreigner in her own country. But there's still a place she calls home: an abandoned house in ruins, haunted by the presence of her grandfather who disappeared mysteriously during the civil war. Something happened in this house. Something violent.

Nada is a young woman searching for the truth and discovering herself.

# INTERVIEW

## WITH JIHANE CHOUAIB

### Why «Go Home»?

«Go home» is something you get told a lot when you are an emigrant. «Go home, go back to where you come from». And one day you go back to your home country, and you hear «go home» again. You're not from there anymore. Because you have changed, and because the country has changed. What is «home» today? Is there a new way to define it? What does it mean to belong, in a time of constant migration?

Besides Lebanon, where the film takes place, Go Home has many origins, like me.

These houses with walls dripping with water, the paints flaking off, gardens turned into dumping grounds... This feeling that everything is unraveling, and yet, it is beautiful...It is not unlike the cinematic vision that Arturo Ripstein has of Mexico, the country where I grew up.

The film's «home» also has a northern tinge: Russian fogs, Scottish ghosts, Bergman's films. Interior films, where, he says, «intimate obsessions blur the representation of reality».

### Whence arose the desire to make this film?

An image that is haunting. For over ten years, I had in mind a girl planted in a garden filled with garbage. I wanted to understand what she had to say. I had to make this movie.

Ironically, today, in 2015, the issue that mobilizes Lebanese civil society, without political or clerical manipulation, for the first time in its history, the subject about which people spontaneously demonstrate against is the failure in garbage collection.

In the film, the piles of garbage in the garden are as lids placed on the memory of the war. I wanted to confront the collective amnesia of Lebanon, a country where 17,000 people have vanished during the civil war. Wandering ghosts that remain unburied. It's impossible to mourn them correctly. That may be why Nada feels sure her grandfather is buried under the garbage.

### What ties do you have with Lebanon?

It is a weave of memories, stories, feelings and fantasies. I was born in Lebanon, but I do not live there anymore. I go back often, but it is not like having a daily life. Mostly, it is about memory. It's the point of view of the children of the war and the exiled.

As children, in the 70's and 80's, the Lebanese civil war was absolutely incomprehensible. How could your parents who had loved each other so much, tear themselves apart and kill one another? That is the harsh reality of civil war.

When we were filming «Pays rêvé» (Dreamed Country), Wajdi Mouawad, the Lebanese author and playwright, told me : «I cannot go back to Lebanon to write. Lebanon has become a black box within me – a Pandora's box – from which I extract what I do, my fictional work. If I open it up in broad daylight, it could disappear and I do not know what monster I might confront».

For me, Go Home was a mean of trying to pry open this Pandora's box. Through fiction, I wanted to take the risk of seeing what lurked underneath, to confront the unfathomable.

That is why the film is not a depiction of Lebanon as an actual contemporary society. It is an imaginary territory, seen through the eyes of Nada's character.



## **Nada goes against the grain...**

I make films to reveal female characters in search of the absolute. Women who do not conform to reality. When Nada first appears to us, she is padlocked, stubborn, and awkward. Above all, she is profoundly alone. Driven by an integrity that is so strong, she refuses all compromises.

She is a stranger in her own country. Her family is torn apart. Her childhood home is devastated, vandalized, desecrated, drowned in garbage. However, Nada hangs on. She tries to mend things up. She does not yet know what she is doing, but she is plowing forward. She fights, she tries, and she takes risks. She is a survivor; haunted by a pain she does not understand herself.

There is a mystery about this house that resonates with the mystery surrounding her.

There is something to understand and something to resolve, so we can fully accompany her.

Little by little, induced by shifts and sensation, her memory rises to the surface and becomes clearer. Only then, the door opens, and we can share her inner pain, confront it with her and proceed to heal with her. Reconcile, open up, flourish, look out, and finally be able to love.

Go Home is a coming of age story. It deals with the childhood we refuse to abandon, but that we must let go of, before it kills us.

## **What made you choose Golshifteh Farahani to play the role of Nada?**

I have faith in the power of a face. The countenance, the gaze that give us access to an inner world.

Golshifteh has an extraordinary presence, literally. With her beauty, her mystery, the transparency and purity of her acting... She is magical, and that magic anchors the film outside of a basic reality. Not only are we looking at Nada, we are glimpsing at her soul.

I am convinced that poetry speaks more about reality than everyday language. I am part of a tradition in cinema that still believes in the magic of an actress as a mythical creature, while confronting strong and contemporary topics and seeking the truth of feelings.

The fact that Golshifteh is not Lebanese, for me, is interesting. She plays the part of a foreigner in her own country. Furthermore, Golshifteh, like Nada, is an exile. She knows the wrench of parting.

## **How did she contribute to the building of Nada's character?**

Golshifteh appropriated Nada, or, as she would say it, Nada appropriated Golshifteh.

First, she had a reading of her own, full of tenderness and understanding for this lonely and tormented character. She found her funny and touching, she liked her extreme and whimsical sides, her touch of madness. Golshifteh has a lot of humor and fantasy. She saw that too, underlying the drama. She was game for all my strangest proposals to enhance the complexity of Nada.

She also learned the Lebanese dialect, chewed up my wobbly accent and made it hers. She immersed herself completely in the character, day and night, so that Nada began to haunt her, to transform her.

Golshifteh defended her character tooth and nail, always looking to make it understood, and felt from within. Even in her wildest choices and most clumsy acts. Wanting also to respect the letter of the precisely written dialogue, where every word counts. She brought to the character all of her thrilling sensitivity. She gave her life.



## **How did Maximilien Seweryn get involved in the film?**

Maximilien was a real surprise. When I met him, he had just returned from London where he had spent a few years working and studying his craft. I liked his energy and his enthusiasm.. He made me want to rejuvenate the character and make him the little brother.

Moreover, Maximilien, like Sam -the character he portrays- is a French of Lebanese origin. He knows very well how to walk the thin line between the various identities. Like Sam, he does not speak Arabic perfectly, but when he travels to Lebanon, he likes to blend in, discuss and party with many people from different backgrounds. This allowed me great improvisational freedom, especially when filming the scenes with the local villagers, most of whom are non-professional actors.

## **How did the two actors work together to build that fraternal relationship?**

There was not much building to do. It was there from the beginning. For me, the most important issue in choosing the actor who would play Sam was the chemistry with Golshifteh Farahani. When they first met, they launched into an improvised scene, and that clinched it.

They were game. Exchanging verbal jabs, provoking one another, with tenderness, but never wearing gloves. It seemed as though they had known each other forever. A perfect match, really.

This is a brotherhood tale, but it is really a love story. Nada and Sam are inseparable. They can inflict a lot of pain to each other, trade punches and insults, because their love is unfailing. Part of my inspiration came from Jean Cocteau's novel (and film) *Les Enfants terribles*, where there is that almost incestuous relationship between a brother and a sister. Mainly they remain childish, almost immature. There is something very touching about immaturity.

One of the film's ambitions is to show the family from the inside, beyond any social rules and conventions. Unleashed and slovenly. A cradle of love and suffocation. A place where childhood survives, comforting and menacing at once.

## **Tell us about this intriguing boy. How did the character of Jalal come into the story?**

Jalal is the only one in the village with whom Nada can establish a real connection. A little sullen stalker, who skips off school, and spends his time « spying » on her. He is a teenager, because from the moment Nada comes back to her country of origin, and begins to camp out in her childhood home, she « regresses ». She becomes a child again, with all the innocence and absence of compromise that comes with it. She can only connect with somebody very young, who then becomes her equal.

When Nada and her brother Sam disagree on the issues of their stay and the way of seeing the country, Jalal, the teenager, becomes a kind of second brother. The one who remains faithful, and continues to blindly follow his older sister. Nada kind of replaces Sam with Jalal. This creates tensions and jealousies, typical of a love triangle.

François Nour, who plays Jalal, had never set foot on a film set. It was kind of a wild casting. I was looking for someone who would make me think of a film by Pasolini. He proved to be wonderful. Simple and profound, yet unpretentious. He is a truly natural actor.



### **Tell us about the other Lebanese actors.**

This is the first time I worked in Arabic (the movie's second idiom) and I met amazing actors who often do not have enough opportunity to express themselves in cinema, as there are still very few feature films produced in Lebanon. Julia Kassar, who plays Colette, is one of the very best Lebanese actresses. Warm and funny, with a sort of Italian sensuality. Also Mireille Malouf who has been performing many years with Peter Brook. She 's a great tragedian. She plays Aunt Nour in the film. Mohamed Akil who plays Kosta, the former militiaman, has great charisma. I was looking for someone who could hold his own against the power of Golshifteh, and destabilize Nada. At the same time, he needed to have great humanity, since the former militiaman, as the grandfather, is a dual character.

I had great pleasure to work with all the actors. I filmed them with love, and I hope it comes through.

### **Where is the house actually located?**

The physical challenge of the film occurs in that house. Behind closed doors, yet open to the four winds. Like a broken, torn up nest. A tormented soul.

I myself have a family home in Lebanon that was totally vandalized. Various militias occupied it. Obscene graffiti and political insults covered the walls. The place where it is located remained dangerous and inaccessible for a long time. Only at the end of the war was I able to return to the house. It was a total shock.

In Lebanon, a country that would so much like to erase its past, there are so many houses like these. They litter the landscape like time capsules, constantly reminding us of the violence of wars.

The house that serves as a backdrop to the film is located high in the mountains, near the Chouf region, southeast of Beirut, at an altitude of 2,000 meters. We filmed in the dead of winter. It was freezing cold and we were very isolated.

We all have felt, cast and crew, what it really means to camp in a hostile ruin and try to make it ours. It was rough and beautiful at the same time. Very poetic too, thanks to the wonderful work of Zeina Demelero, our production designer, and Tommaso Fiorilli, our director of photography. We all became enamored with this ruin.

In a sense, this house could be anywhere. It projects the character's state of mind. It is the inside of her head; it represents her suffering and her fantasy. At first, she cannot live with herself, she is afraid of the house where she locked herself in. She wants to cleanse the place, literally purify it. Little by little, she starts a dialogue with the house and begins to invest it. With her brother, she builds a cabin made of sheets. Like a kid, she hangs ephemeral charms. Then only can she begin to reconcile herself with the house. It really becomes hers.



### **How did you address the guilt issue that permeates the film?**

What is so horrific about civil war is that everyone is guilty. Even if you have not committed any crime, even if you are a child. These wars are so dirty and ruthless that guilt spreads everywhere. It is guilt by association.

Nada cannot recall precisely what happened to her grandfather. Was he a victim? Was he a torturer? Did he want to protect her? Did he make her his accomplice? Was she on the side of the bad guys? It is possible that she did nothing wrong, but war is ingrained within her. Such is the violence of History.

It is also possible to imagine that she cannot, that she will not remember, because of the violence she has endured. In the film, there are scenes of contradictory reminiscence, their meaning fluctuates.

After the wars end, the murderers live on. They are depicted as heroes or bad guys, depending on your point of view. You rub shoulders with them, as they become your new neighbors.

Today it's nearly impossible to speak out about this war in a coherent, collective way. There is no official version accepted by all. No shared history book for the youth. Each community, each neighborhood, has its own version of the facts. Everyone is afraid to reopen wounds or rekindle divisiveness. There can be no objective account. Only art and fiction can address these issues freely.

### **How did you approach Nada's memories and her relationship to reality?**

I treated these memories as if they were clues for a self-investigation of her soul (or subconscious). It is a progressive discovery, a journey that leads to understanding. For Nada, memories are hard to grasp. They beset her and escape her at the same time. They keep changing shapes and are far from reliable.

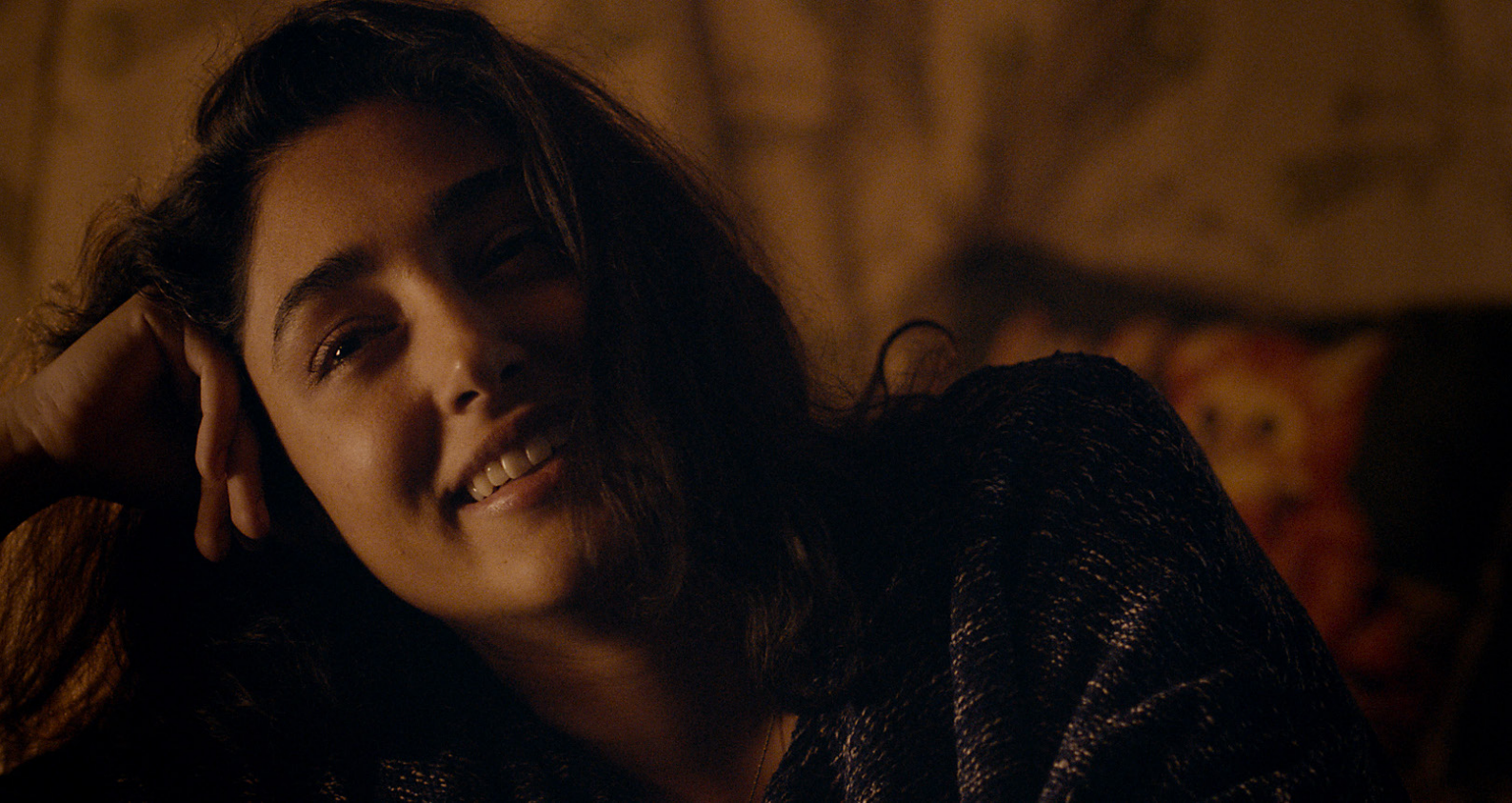
I wanted to avoid flashbacks that try to mimic the past. Instead, there are subtle shifts in sight and sound, at the child's level, that creep into the present. Conversely, the present influences the past, because her memory shift in accordance with the story she tells herself and what others tell her. Through her encounters and her own life experience, memories become fiction.

I have a very strong relationship to sound, right from the moment I write. It allows me, even more than the image, to express the subjectivity of my characters. With Beatrice Wick, we wanted to weave sounds and music into the same fabric, from within the character. And we have integrated a forgotten nursery rhyme, at first almost inaudible, then gradually more present and haunting. Finally, I put that nursery rhyme in Bachar Khalifé's hands, to transform it into a song, final outbreak, sung by Golshifteh.

These memories belong only to Nada, not to his brother. The film concentrates on her specific point of view. Her brother clings to the present. He is willing to compromise, whereas Nada sees herself as the custodian watching over the memory of the house, and the family.

Nobody asked her. She has invested herself in this mission, like Antigone. Whatever the cost, even if it leads to her demise. Or, in the end, find her own truth.





# GOLSHIFTEH FARAHANI

Golshifteh Farahani is an established star in Iran. Forced into exile, she now lives in Paris. She has acted in more than 25 films, many of which have received international recognition. She enjoys an increasingly thriving and prestigious career, having worked with directors like Ridley Scott, Hiner Saleem, Mia Hansen-Løve and Christophe Honoré.

About her character in *Go Home*, she said that it enabled her to “push her limits like never before”.

## SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

- 2015 GO HOME directed by Jihane Chouaib
- 2015 LES DEUX AMIS, directed by Louis Garrel
- 2015 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: Dead Men Tell No Tales, co-directed by Joachim Rønning and Espen Sandberg.
- 2015 LES MALHEURS DE SOPHIE, directed by Christophe Honoré
- 2014 EXODUS (GODS AND KINGS), directed by Ridley Scott
  - EDEN, directed by Mia Hansen-Love
  - MY SWEET PEPPER LAND, directed by Hiner Saleem
- 2013 SYNGUE SABOUR, directed by Atiq Rahimi
- 2011 POULET AUX PRUNES, directed by Marjane Satrapi
- 2009 À PROPOS D'ELLY, directed by Ashgar Farhadi
- 2007 HALF MOON, directed by Bahman Ghobadi



# MAXIMILIEN SEWERYN

Maximilien Seweryn began his acting career by joining Peter Brook's theater company, in which he acted in the play 11 and 12, for one full year. He then went on to refine his craft at the prestigious Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London, before joining the Cheek by Jowl company where he played under director Declan Donellan, at the Barbican Centre.

Go Home, directed by Jihane Chouaib, is his first on-screen big role. Today, he enjoys an international career in both theater and films.

## FILMOGRAPHY

- 2015 ORPHELINE, directed by Arnaud DES PALLIÈRES
- 2015 GO HOME, directed by Jihane CHOUAIB
- 2014 THE EMPEROR, directed by Lee TAMAHOURI



# JIHANE CHOUAIB

Jihane Chouaib was born in Beirut, Lebanon. Fleeing the civil war, her family settles in Mexico, where Jihane spends her childhood. During her teenage years, she travels to France where she studies philosophy and discovers theater. She immediately develops a strong relationship to writing, and works as a screenwriter and consultant. Meanwhile, she directs several short and medium length films shot in France, including the highly acclaimed *Sous mon lit* (Under my Bed), presented at the Critic's Week during the Cannes Film Festival, in 2005. Her most recent film is *Pays rêvé* (Dreamed Country), a feature documentary shot in Lebanon, released in October 2012.

## FILMOGRAPHY

- 2015 GO HOME, (feature length fiction)
- 2012 PAYS RÊVÉ (feature length documentary)
- 2009 DRU (short film part of the collective fiction CYPRINE)
- 2005 SOUS MON LIT (medium length fiction)
- 2000 OTTO OU DES CONFITURES (medium length fiction)



## ON CAMERA

Nada

Sam

Jalal

Aunt Nour

Colette

Costa

Golshifteh Farahani

Maximilien Seweryn

François Nour

Mireille Maalouf

Julia Kassar

Mohamad Akil

## BEHIND THE CAMERA

Written and directed

Photography

Editing

Music

Sound

Set Design

Costume Design

Production Manager

Producer

Coproducers

Associate Producer

Jihane Chouaib

Tommaso Fiorilli

Ludo Troch

Béatrice Wick, Bachar Mar Khalife

Henri Maïkoff, Béatrice Wick, Aline Gravoy, Emmanuel Croset

Zeina Saab De Melero

Béatrice Harb

Marianne Katra (Lebanon), Benjamin Lanlard (France)

Nathalie Trafford (Paraiso Production Diffusion)

Samir (Dschoint Ventschr) and Marie Besson (Eklektik Productions)

Pierre Sarraf (Né à Beyrouth)