

TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM STUDY CENTER

SUNDAY
MARCH 3, 2019
2 PM • WHITNEY
HUMANITIES CENTER

THE CIRCLE

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



Jafar Panahi's *THE CIRCLE* (*DAYEREH*) weaves together the tales and tribulations of multiple women over the course of a single day and night in Tehran. It also tells the story of a woman's experiences over an entire lifetime, from birth in the morning (the first line is "It's a girl!") to maturity late at night. The results are both "a memorable and devastating indictment of the oppression facing many women in Iran" (Desson Thomas) and "a wondrous meditation on the unspoken communication that sometimes passes between members of the same sex" (Stephanie Zacharek). "While *THE CIRCLE* certainly paints a bleak portrait," writes Stephen Rea, "there's a grace and beauty to the filmmaking that transform this crushingly sad tale into a work of revelatory art."

Nº.9
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Jafar Panahi was born into a working-class family in East Azerbaijan, Iran, in 1960, and his childhood interest in 8mm filmmaking led to an assignment as a war cinematographer in the early 80s when he was drafted into the Iran-Iraq War. This was followed by film school and a series of short films and television documentaries that drew attention from director Abbas Kiarostami. While Panahi was working as an AD for Kiarostami's *THROUGH THE OLIVE TREES*, the two men collaborated on the screenplay for *THE WHITE BALLOON*, which became Panahi's first feature film as a director and won the *Caméra d'Or* at Cannes. *THE CIRCLE* was Panahi's third feature, but making it was no small feat.

President Khatami's election in 1997 on a platform of liberalization and reform led to a backlash by conservatives irate at what they saw as a cinema increasingly "ignoring the values and the high position of women" and "trampling over the limits and sharia rules on a large scale." Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG) consequently denied Panahi a permit to shoot his critical, women-focused film for nine months, and conceded only after protests over the silencing of a Cannes prize-winner. After completing the film, Panahi created multiple prints of it and hid them around the country due to well-founded censorship fears. One print was illegally submitted to the Venice Film Festival and announced as part of the 2000 program before being granted a permit, which was begrudgingly given three days before the screening by an MCIG caught between conflicting domestic and international demands. *THE CIRCLE* won numerous prizes including the Golden Lion at Venice, and cemented Panahi's place as a leading figure of the Iranian New Wave. However, the film was banned in Iran for its "completely dark and humiliating perspective" and for being "offensive to Muslim women."

THE CIRCLE's documentary-like visual style, with many long takes and few cuts, is partnered with what Lisa Schwarzbaum calls "a new elegance of vocabulary." Panahi uses the characters to determine the camera's movements throughout the film, with an extended close shot at the maternity ward (something like what might be seen by a baby being held by her mother) giving way to a fluid, racing camera when we pick up the stories of the young women, followed by a static camera when we move into the final story. He features frequent shots of the women looking, but does not always show us what they see, asking audiences to come up with their own interpretations and "make their own mental images instead of getting those images from me." Taking us full circle, the first and last shot are white-to-black mirrors of one another, and Panahi fills the film with circle motifs, from the shape of the prison cell to the steps of the cinema. Panahi remarks, "I believe that not only in Iran but all over the world people live in circles of restrictions. Depending on geographical, political, and economic conditions, these circles are larger or smaller, but regardless of the size, people strive to enlarge their circles."

Panahi was placed under house arrest in 2010 and given a 20-year ban on writing or directing for the cinema. He continues to make films.

DIRECTED BY **JAFAR PANAHİ**
SCREENPLAY BY **KAMBUZIA PARTOVI** AND
JAFAR PANAHİ
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY **BAHRAM BADAQSHANI**
PRODUCED BY **JAFAR PANAHİ FILM**
PRODUCTIONS
(2000) 90 MINS.
STARRING **NARGESS MAMIZADEH, MARYIAM**
PALVIN ALMANI, MOJGAN FARAMARZI,
ELHAM SABOKTAKIN, FERESHTEH SADRE
ORAFAYI, MONIR ARAB, AND MAEDEH
TAHMASEBI

DID YOU KNOW: DESPITE BEING BANNED, *THE CIRCLE* HAD SOME SURREPTITIOUS SCREENINGS IN IRAN AND WAS SELECTED AS BEST FILM OF THE YEAR BY THE IRANIAN CINEMA GUILDS. HOWEVER, ITS WIN MEANT THE TOP AWARD COULD NOT BE ANNOUNCED AT THE CEREMONY, AND PANAHİ, WHO WAS IN ATTENDANCE, HAD TO ACCEPT HIS PRIZE AFTER THE EVENT CONCLUDED.

NEXT UP: PAUL NEWMAN IS FAST EDDIE FELSON AND JACKIE GLEASON IS MINNESOTA FATS IN ROBERT ROSSEN'S 1961 POOL HALL CLASSIC, **THE HUSTLER**. JOIN THE FILM STUDY CENTER FOR THIS SPECIAL SCREENING OF AN ORIGINAL, VINTAGE 1961 35MM PRINT ON **SUNDAY, APRIL 7 AT 2:00 PM.**