

Norma Productions Assaf Amir Present



MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
la Biennale di Venezia 2012
Venezia 69 - Competition

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OFFICIAL SELECTION 2012

FILL *the* VOID

HADAS YARON

YIFTACH KLEIN

IRIT SHELEG

CHAIM SHARIR

written & directed by
RAMA BURSSTEIN





SYNOPSIS

Fill the Void tells the story of an Orthodox Hassidic family from Tel Aviv. Eighteen-year-old Shira is the youngest daughter of the family. She is about to be married off to a promising young man of the same age and background. It is a dream-come-true, and Shira feels prepared and excited.

On Purim, her twenty-eight-year-old sister, Esther, dies while giving birth to her first child. The pain and grief that overwhelm the family postpone Shira's promised match.

Everything changes when an offer is proposed to match Yochay – the late Esther's husband – to a widow from Belgium. Yochay feels it's too early, although he realizes that sooner or later he must seriously consider getting married again.

When the girls' mother finds out that Yochay may leave the country with her only grandchild, she proposes a match between Shira and the widower. Shira will have to choose between her heart's wish and her family duty ...





DIRECTOR'S NOTES

STORY

It began with the fact that my work has always focused on relationships between men and women. Marriages are never forced in Judaism. In the Hasidic world in which this film is set, parents do raise proposed matches with their children, but even then the young couple must agree.

I was chatting with someone at the wedding of a friend's daughter, when a pretty young girl no older than eighteen came up to our table. She was wearing a gold watch, diamond earrings, and a ring that highlighted the stone in its setting – a clear indication that she was recently engaged. My friend congratulated her with a warm *mazal tov*, but still, there was something a little odd about their conversation.

When the girl left, my friend said to me: “Did you see that pretty young thing? She got engaged a month ago to the husband of her late sister.”

That was all I needed to set my imagination into overdrive. All it needed was a brief time to stew within me before I came up with the outline for the story of *Fill the Void*.



MOTIVATION

I set out on this journey out of a deep sense of pain. I felt that the ultra-Orthodox community has no voice in the cultural dialogue. You might even say we are mute. It's fine for someone on the outside to interpret us as long as someone on the inside is telling a story. Our political voice is loud – even boisterous – but our artistic and cultural voice remains muffled and faint. I'm not good at agendas and politics. What I am good at is telling a story. I'm good at telling about those things I'm passionate about, and what can I do?

They are all tied to the ultra-Orthodox world of observance.

Fill the Void has nothing whatsoever to do with the religious-secular dialogue. That doesn't interest me quite as much. *Fill the Void* opens a peephole into a tiny story taken from a very special and complex world. By its very definition, it avoids making any comparison between the two worlds. It has enough self-confidence to tell its own story. I believe that the only way to bridge these two worlds is through unprejudiced honesty. If there is to be such a bridge, it must emerge from some common denominator that can be found in the heart.

AESTHETIC

I knew that I was making a little film that takes place mainly in the home. The tools at my disposal were the characters, the dialogues, the colors, and the frame. With me, this limited focus took shape when I was making movies within the ultra-Orthodox community.

The lighting, soft textures, the frame ... that was all the work of *Asaf Sudry* (cinematographer). I was left to watch in awe and take pleasure in the fact that all too often he understood me better than I even understood myself. Colorful costumes were a working assumption for the costume designer, but she derived everything from the Hasidic world in a way that I never could.



LOCATION TEL AVIV

It has to do with my insistence on making a film that avoids the religious-secular dialogue. If the location was some ultra-Orthodox town, this film would be so removed from that dialogue that no one would even notice that it ignores the dispute between these two sides.

The statement itself is expressed in the notion of locating the film in Tel Aviv but not giving too much of it and not relating in any way to the secular nature of the location. It's another Tel Aviv option. It may be less well-known, but it exists nonetheless in an authentic form. I live in Tel Aviv.

I belong to an ultra-Orthodox Hasidic community, a community that offers a very vibrant and full life. We live peacefully with our secular neighbors. We don't interfere in their lives, and they don't interfere in ours.

JANE AUSTEN

I love Jane Austen. She's romantic, intelligent, and full of humor. I read her as a girl, and I've seen films based on her work. The parallel is also quite obvious in that *Fill the Void* takes place in a world where the rules are rigid and clear. The characters are not looking for some way to burst out of that world. Instead, they are trying to find a way to live within it.

Fill the Void has a historical air about it. It could just have easily have been located in Poland of the last century, in Brooklyn, or now, in Tel Aviv. It is somewhat cut off from the modern world, and the complications that make up the plot and their resolution have much in common with the way Jane Austen tells a story.



NORMA PRODUCTIONS

Norma productions was established by producer *Assaf Amir* in 1995. Amir's debut production, *Chronicle of a Disappearance* by director *Elia Suleiman*, won the Luigi De Laurentiis Award at Venice Film Festival 1996. Since then, the company's productions won five Israeli Academy Awards, four Best Film awards at Jerusalem Film Festival, and an array of awards in international festivals.

Norma Productions' titles include: *Broken Wings*, by Nir Bergman (Grand Prix at the Tokyo International Film Festival 2003, Panorama Audience Award, Berlinale Film Festival 2004) *The Cemetery Club*, by Tali Shemesh (doc. Nominated for the European Film Academy Award) *What a Wonderful Place*, by Eyal Halfon (Grand Jury Prize at Karlovy Vary Film Festival) *Intimate Grammar*, by Nir Bergman (winner of the 2010 Tokyo Grand Prix) *Epilogue* by Amir Manor (selected for the 2012 Venice Days).



BIOGRAPHY DIRECTOR

Rama Burshtein was born in New York, USA in 1967. She graduated the Sam Spiegel Film and Television School, Jerusalem in 1994. During those years Rama became deeply religious and upon her graduation she dedicated herself to promoting film as a tool for self expression in the orthodox community.

Rama wrote, directed and produced films for the orthodox community, some of them for women only. She was also teaching directing and scriptwriting in various film and television institutions within the orthodox community; those include Ma'ale Film School, Yad Benjamin Film School for Woman, Ulpena Arts School, Jerusalem.

Fill the Void is her first feature film.

HADAS YARON

Born in Israel, 1990. Theatre Graduate of Tichon Eroni Alef Art School Tel Aviv.
Played young Talia in Daniel Syrkin's 2006 feature film, *Out of Sight*.
Her role in *Fill the Void*, is her first lead in a feature film.

YIFTACH KLEIN

Born in Tel Aviv, 1972. Graduate of Nissan Nativ acting school, 1997.
Starred in leading roles in the theatre and several TV series, including,
Death Of A Salesman, *The Glass Menagerie* and *Tuesdays With Murray*. His solo play, *At Noon*,
telling the story of an Israeli POW in the 1973 war, was presented in Israel and internationally, winning several prizes.
Wrote and directed *Flip Out*, in 2010.
Cinema: *Noodle*, *Sea Salt*, *The Policeman*. Starred this year in *Ideal Husband* and *Happy Ending*.



CAST

Shira *Hadas Yaron* · Yochay *Yiftach Klein* · Rivka *Irit Sheleg* · Aharon *Chaim Sharir*
Aunt Hanna *Razia Israely* · Frieda *Hila Feldman* · Esther *Renana Raz* · Shifi *Yael Tal*
Shtreicher *Michael David Weigl* · Yossi *Ido Samuel* · Bilha *Neta Moran*
Rabbi *Melech Thal*

CREW

Written & Directed by *Rama Burshtein* · Producer *Assaf Amir* · Cinematographer *Asaf Sudry*
Editor *Sharon Elovic* · Music composed by *Yitzhak Azulay* · Art Director *Ori Aminov*
Casting Director *Michal Koren* · Makeup Artist *Eti Bennun* · Costume Designer *Chani Gurewitz*
Gaffer *Michael Berdougo* · Sound Recordist *Moti Hefetz* · Sound Designer *Aviv Aldema*
Post Production Producer *Tammy Cohen*



TECHNICAL DETAILS

Length: 90 minutes · Aspect ratio: 1:2.35 · Colour · Shot on Alexa · Hebrew, English subtitles

WORLD SALES

THE MATCH FACTORY

Balthasarstraße 79–81 · 50670 Köln · Germany

Tel: +49 221 53 97 09 -0 · Fax: +49 221 53 97 09 -10 · info@matchfactory.de

www.the-match-factory.com



INTERNATIONAL PRESS

WOLFGANG W. WERNER PUBLIC RELATIONS

Tal 46 · 80331 München · Germany

phone +49 89 38 38 67 -0 · fax +49 89 38 38 67 -11 · info@werner-pr.de

In Venice:

Christiane Leithardt – cell +49 179 104 80 64 · Wolfgang Werner – cell +49 170 333 93 53

