

DARINE HOTAIT, Director

Darine Hotait (she/her) is a writer and film director. Her work focuses on the politics of identity, Arab & African diaspora, and science fiction. She has written and directed a dozen award-winning narrative films that can be seen on Sundance Channel, The New Yorker Magazine, AMC Networks, BBC, Forbes, Outfest, and at numerous Oscar-qualifying international film festivals. She is the recipient of the New York Council on the Arts Artist Award, the New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, the Jerome Hill Final Award, Robert Cimetta Award, the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture Award, and the 40 under 40 Arab America Foundation Award. Her work received the support of The Sundance Institute, Comedy Central, Ghetto Film Roster, Jerome Foundation, Cannes Film Festival Screenwriters' Pavilion, and The Independent Film Project. Her latest film TALLAHASSEE (2021) premiered at the 10th Blackstar Film Festival, was nominated for Best Narrative Short Film at the 22nd Woodstock Film Festival and at the 5th El Gouna Film Festival, and won the Audience Award for Best Narrative Film at Mizna Film Festival. Tallahassee will be published exclusively by The New Yorker Magazine in January 2022. Darine is the founder of the film incubator and production company Cinephilia Productions championing the next generation of Arab and African filmmakers and storytellers. She resides in NYC.

Filmography:

Sherman (2021, director)

Tallahassee (2021, director)

Not For Profit (2020, director)

Like Salt (2018, writer/director)

I Say Dust (2015, writer/director)

Beirut Hide and Seek (2011, writer/director)

The Far Side of Laughter (2009, writer/director)

MEVLUT AKKAYA, Producer

Mevlut Akkaya is an award-winning producer and director of stage and screen and has been an active member of the international entertainment community for over 15 years.

Akkaya's most notable films include FIVE MINARETS IN NEW YORK starring award-winning and Emmy nominated celebrities Gina Gershon (Spiderman, Family Guy), Robert Patrick (Terminator II) and Danny Glover (Lethal Weapon); NAKED MIND, a full-length documentary about Buddhism, which explores its practice from East to West; WHEN COMEDY WENT TO SCHOOL, a documentary about the American Stand-up Comedy Industry, starring Jerry Lewis, Larry King, Jackie Mason, and Jerry Stiller, distributed International Film Circuit and First Run Features. THE DOORMAN, starring Lucas Akoskin and Peter Bogdanovich, distributed by Gigantic Release. Mr. Akkaya was Supervising Producer for the film TOSS-UP, which won numerous international awards, and a record-setting 11 awards at the Antalya Film Festival, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Script, and Best Actor. The film was also officially selected to screen at the respected Karlovy Vary Film Festival, the Montreal International Film

Festival, and the Kiev International Film Festival. His other co-produced project, EMBERS, selected for IFP, the film opened at the prestigious Chicago International Film Festival and won the best film at the New Orleans International Film Festival. Currently, Akkaya is in postproduction with ON THE ROAD WITH AHMAD JAMAL, a documentary about the jazz legend Ahmad Jamal and in development with a political thriller, feature film REVOLUTION INC. A feature film, LAST OF LIVING, a dramatic story of the deeply emotional journey to find the courage to be yourself and forever change your destiny and SHADOW WARS, an episodic streaming international spy series.

MADALINE JOHNSON, Screenwriter

Madeline Johnson is an award-winning screenwriter and director who has written three feature films and ten short scripts. She is currently finishing final drafts of two feature scripts and developing an interactive series that was a finalist for Sundance Institute's New Voices' Lab and advanced to the second round for Macro's Episodic Lab powered by the Black List. Her most recent short film "Beyond Our Mountains" is an official selection of the Edmonton International Film Festival, Portland Film Festival, Gig Harbor Film Festival, Female Eye Film Festival, Crown Heights Film Festival, among several others. It won the Grand Jury Award at the Nevada Film Festival, Best Foreign Short at the Twister Alley Film Festival, Honorable Mention for the NYWIFT Online Shorts Film Festival, was a semi-finalist for JellyFest, and won Best World Director at the Austin Revolution! Film Festival, where it was also nominated for the Lukas Hassel Writer/Director of the Year Award, Best Cinematography Short, World Short, World Actress, and World Actor.

Her debut short film "Juneteenth" was an official selection of the Prague Independent Film Festival, the Budapest Short Film Festival, the Crown Heights Film Festival, and won the Platinum Reel Award at the Nevada International Film Festival in the student competition. At Yale University, she studied Religious Studies and Ethnicity, Race, and Migration. In the Czech Republic, she graduated in 2016 from FAMU International's Academic Preparation Program in Directing.

ILTER AYKAC, Storywriter & Executive Producer

Ilter Aykac received a bachelor's degree in pre-law and criminology and a master's degree in criminal justice holds Advance master certificates in terrorism and leadership. He is an award-winning detective in New York Police Department and received two detectives of the month award. After his first book "How To Graduate Early From College," Aykac, developed many stories, including fiction and non-fiction. The current book, he is working on called "Brentwood," is about 11 different characters struggling through life and the importance of being a single mother, struggling father, immigration, love, and faith.

Beside his detective duties, for the last six years, Ilter Aykac is a professor at John Jay School of criminal justice teaching research methods and theory. He was nominated twice for a distinguished professor award.

SINE ARAS AKTEN, Executive Producer

Sine Aras Akten, MD, Internist and Nephrologist to their prestigious organization with her upcoming publication in The Leading Physicians of the World. Dr. Sine Akten is a highly trained and qualified physician with an extensive expertise in all facets of her work. Dr. Akten has been in practice for 15 years and is currently serving patients within Woodhull Medical and Mental Health Center in Brooklyn, New York.

She recently graduated from New York Film Academy in the field of Film Making. Sine realizes the importance of blending art and science and she is a living example of how the two domains actually convergence. She enjoys writing. She started writing about the ethics and lifelong treatment's complications in end-stage kidney failure in 2019. She initiated a program for Kidney Disease Awareness at Kings Country Hospital to increase the health literacy in kidney disease. Based on this project, she was selected to Harvard "Media & Medicine" program in 2020, where she got the narrative skills in storytelling for patients' cases while enhancing the health literacy in Brooklyn Community. She wrote a book in Turkish as a chronicle of COVID-19 where she collected the patients' stories in narrative way to present to the readers in Turkey. This was part of her assignments from Harvard Media and Medicine. Through this book and her participations to media platforms, she became a liaison between two countries to show the necessity of preparation in pandemics and her book became the best seller. It is about to be published here in NYC soon.