

## Pomegranates and Myrrh

Palestine 2008

**Directed by**  
Najwa Najjar

**Written by**  
Najwa Najjar

**Cinematography**  
Valentine Caniglia

**Original Music**  
Mychael Danna  
Amritha Fernandes Bakshi

**Cast**  
*Ali Suliman*  
Kais  
*Hiam Abbass*  
Umm Habib  
*Yasmine Elmasri*  
Kamar  
*Walid Abdul Salam*  
Odeh

95 min

*Our next screening...*

### **Nostalgia for the Light**

Tue 8 January 2013

Dir: Patricio Guzmán

Haunting documentary, set in Chile's Atacama Desert, fusing astronomy and the legacy of Pinochet's regime.

Welcome to the Film Society's first Palestinian film since our screening of *Divine Intervention* nine years ago. Tonight's film is a very rare treat, one that you'll unlikely to stumble across on TV or DVD let alone the luxury of a cinema.

Part romance, part drama and part political comment, the film has won rave reviews at the Sundance, Rotterdam, Edinburgh, Durban, Locarno, Berlin, Cannes and other global festivals in addition to being screened at select venues in the United States. The film stars veterans of Arab cinema Hiam Abbas, Yasmine Al Massri, Ali Suliman and Ashraf Farah. *Pomegranates and Myrrh* won the award for the 'Screenplay Development Fund' at the Amiens International Film Festival; four awards at the Festival de San Sebastian Cinema in Motion (2008); 'Best Arab Film' Audience Awards at the Doha Tribeca Film Festival (2009); the 'Grand Prix' at the Amal Arab European Film Festival (2009); 'Best Actress' and 'Best Cinematographer' at the Muscat International Film Festival (2010); and the Youssef Chahine 'Grand Prix de Cinema' and 'Special Mention for Best Actress' at the Festival International de Cinéma d'Auteur de Rabat (2010).

*Albawaba Business*

It's often said that D.W.Griffith invented the language of film, and that little has changed since he did that. Sure, we've got CGI and F/X galore now, but as the song in Michael Curtiz's 1942 film *Casablanca* says, "The fundamental things apply, as time goes by." Palestinian director Najwa Najjar's multi-award-winning first fiction feature *Pomegranates and Myrrh* puts the visual language Griffith invented to good use. Its stark look - several scenes seem to have been shot in natural or near natural light, with lots of close-ups and few master shots - put the viewer right inside her story of a middle class land owning family in Ramallah, in occupied Palestine. Najjar's film is an intimate account of what happens when these facts on the ground determine every aspect of one's life, and her visual style is an analogue to this constriction. She takes the most basic element of Griffith's language, rhythm, as the driving force for telling her story of a lovely just married young Palestinian woman Kamar, whose only escape is through dance, and her images, whether staccato or fluid, reflect its pulse. Ramallah's Fanon ensemble play the members of Kamar's dance class, and give a spectacular performance of a piece called *Pomegranates and Myrrh* as the film's climax which proves that joy flower even in harsh political climates.

*Michael McDonagh. Cultureculture.net*

