

THE FLYING CARPET

CINÉMA VÉRITÉ
DRAMA/INSPIRATIONAL/
CULTURE
60-90'



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MESAS

PRODUCTION

HOW CAN ART HELP IN THE REHABILITATION OF TRAUMATISED COMMUNITIES?

We followed the 6th edition of the Flying Carpet Festival to see how the magic happened and to understand the meaning behind this special event.



LOGLINE

It is the story of a circus show made by international artists and refugees, that breaks stereotypes and barriers, creating a bridge between different cultures. A rare, magical occasion the world should know about.

SYNOPSIS

Once a year, at the Turkish-Syrian border, a circus community of refugees hosts a group of artists from all around the world. In a brief period, performers, musicians, dancers and painters come together to create one of life's most magical experiences.

Mardin, the ancient Kurdish town, becomes the nest for the most wonderful itinerant show a child could imagine, tearing apart stereotypes and allowing everyone to fly on a magic carpet.

THE CONTEXT



SOCIAL CIRCUS

It is more than teaching circus skills. It is **a tool for transformation, discipline, creativity and artistic expression.**

It **works effectively with the most vulnerable**, providing them with abilities to engage, learn, play, laugh, join a group, share their skills and collaborate across social boundaries. It feeds positive energy back into their community.

It is **a shown of the power of the arts as a tool for human development and social change**, empowering individuals throughout a deep awareness of their bodies and movements. This, in turn, changes their perception of themselves in society

IT CREATES COMMUNITY. IT CREATES TRUST

A fundamental aspect of social change is **trust**.

Social Circus works on trust, on the firm belief that **somebody is going to be there to catch you if you fall**. Also, on trusting your own body when pushing it to new limits.

Having a sense of community allows anyone to focus on personal growth. **Feeling protected and safe enables individuals to grow stronger, believe in the others, and respect** their environment.

BODY EMPOWERMENT AND CHILDHOOD IN DAMAGED COMMUNITIES.

For some of us, **childhood** means happiness, joy and carefree moments. For others, it is struggle, pain and a huge step to adulthood.

Either way, childhood **is an essential phase that shapes our future** and influences our believe in the goodness of people.



Circus activities empower individuals to embrace their unique characteristics and love themselves unconditionally. They promote self-acceptance by shifting the focus from external appearance to inner qualities and achievements.



THE BEATING HEART

Everything started at **Sirkhane Social Circus**, a school that has been creating a stimulating environment for children and teenagers in Mardin's community since 2012.

Its director, Pinar Demiral, alongside her team, works hard to fulfill their mission: **creating beauty and hope for children in vulnerable situations such as the ones living in Mardin, many of them refugees brought by their parents to escape the Syrian Civil War.** As a result, they develop young adults with strong values willing to help others like them to believe in magic and dream of a bright future.

These young refugees are known as **Circus Heroes**.



WHAT IS THE FLYING CARPET FESTIVAL?



Sirkhane's perseverance and love has inspired many, especially Sahba Aminikia, an Iranian composer and musician based in the U.S., who created the Flying Carpet Festival to support Sirkhane.

Each year, **the Flying Carpet Festival selects talented performers and musicians** from all over the world and give them the opportunity to travel to the Turkish South East and **to co-create a unique, multicultural, itinerant show with the Circus Heroes.**

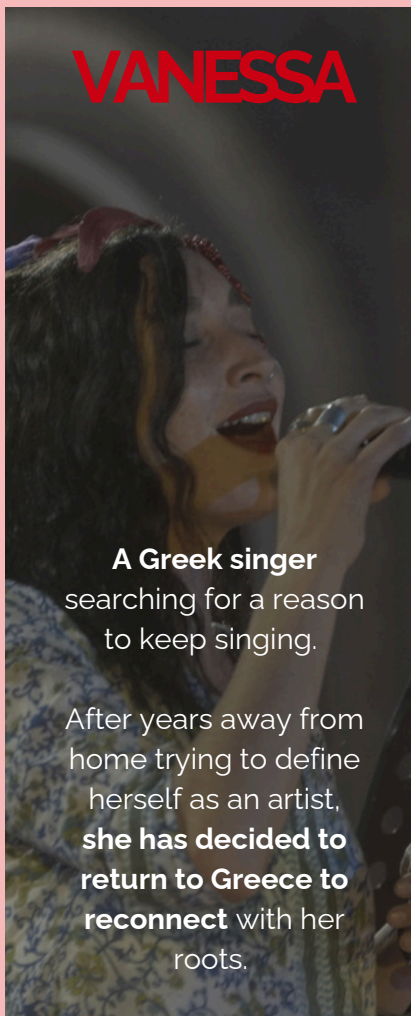
The fusion of their knowledge and the discovery of new techniques **give rise to a peaceful and stimulant global community**, regardless of cultural background, religion or political position.

THE STORY WE TELL

To reveal the complexity of the situation and provide a genuine testimony of what the Flying Carpet Festival is, **we chose to tell the story through the journey of three different characters along the festival.** We followed them through interviews, and stayed most of the time closed to them to understand their reality.

Their stories have one thing in common: **they inhabit the same space and share the same purpose during the festival,** working together daily to create the best experience for the children.

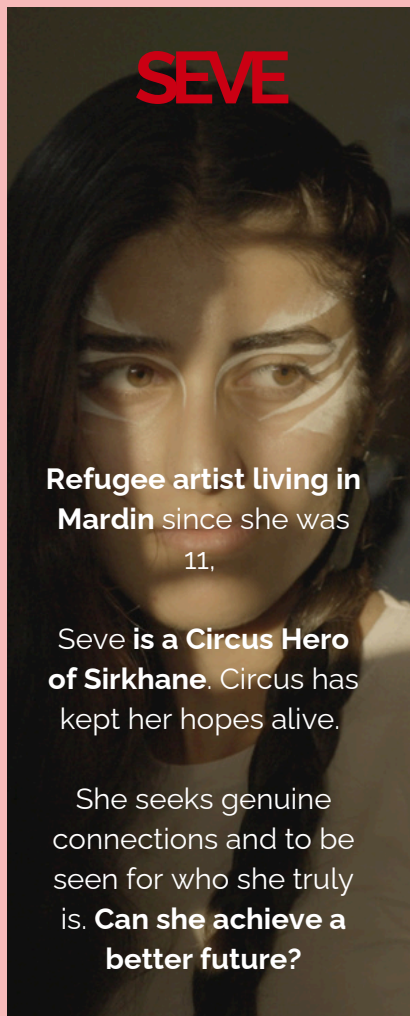
Though their lives intertwine during these days, each remains uniquely their own. **Their diverse perspectives and backgrounds make this story deeply personal, while their connections and growth reveal the profound impact** that a global event like the Flying Carpet Festival has on them.



VANESSA

A Greek singer searching for a reason to keep singing.

After years away from home trying to define herself as an artist, **she has decided to return to Greece to reconnect** with her roots.

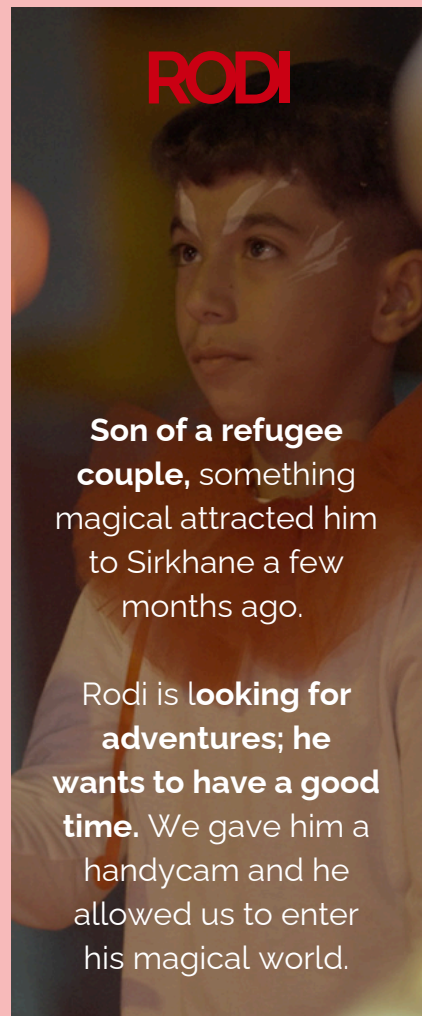


SEVE

Refugee artist living in Mardin since she was 11.

Seve **is a Circus Hero of Sirkhane.** Circus has kept her hopes alive.

She seeks genuine connections and to be seen for who she truly is. **Can she achieve a better future?**



RODI

Son of a refugee couple, something magical attracted him to Sirkhane a few months ago.

Rodi is **looking for adventures; he wants to have a good time.** We gave him a handycam and he allowed us to enter his magical world.

CHARACTERS' DEVELOPMENT

From Refugees to Artists, from Artists to Refugees. Labels and boundaries are nothing if magic shows up.



VANESSA (THE OUTSIDER)

Initially, Vanessa **expected to be the one offering something** to those who have less.

But during her time with the Circus Heroes, **she became the learner**, discovering how strong and humble people can be, even in difficult circumstances.

The community inspired her with their effort and joy.

She also managed to **connect with other artists**, overcome her shyness, and explore new musical traditions. She **deconstructs ideas, creating new conceptions**.

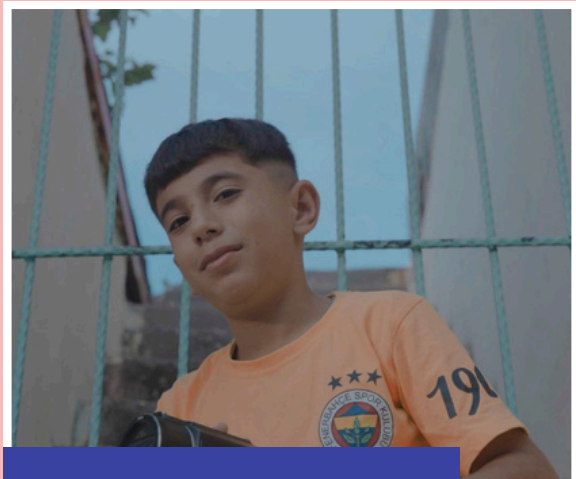


SEVE (THE HERO)

Although she is very young, she is a **veteran of the Flying Carpet**, and has been welcoming artists for six years, most leaving after a few days, never to return.

During the festival, **Seve becomes a symbol for her community and a guiding light for newcomers**. Through art, she travels beyond borders.

Her life remains unchanged after the festival, her opportunities scarce, but she **never loses hope**. She dreams of becoming a fashion designer.



RODI (THE KID)

He **enjoys his childhood** in the beautiful oasis of Sirkhane, **capturing his daily life during the festival with his handycam**.

Through his lens, **we see how Sirkhane has become his second home**. Between school and helping his parents, Rodi learns new tricks, makes new friends, and immerses himself in the magic of the show.



THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS

This year, **the Flying Carpet Festival performance** was inspired by the ancient Persian poem *The Conference of the Birds*, by Attar of Nishapur.

The story tells of **a thousand birds who, consumed by boredom and monotony, embark on a journey through seven valleys to find Simurgh**, the wise bird who flew to the sun. Along the way, they learn the meaning of life. **Their difficult journey mirrors the internal search for meaning** and one's relationship with something else.

Our characters experience a similar journey at the Festival. Their encounters and experiences outside their comfort zones are, to some extent, a parallelism of the themes of *The Conference of the Birds*.



OTHER IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

Pinar Demiral: Multidisciplinary artist and Sirkhane Founder and Director. Co-Director of the Flying Carpet.

Sahba Aminikia: Pianist and Flying Carpet Director.

Ibrahim and Spirit: A Palestinian singer and an American Singer/Artist, they are Vanessa's troop in the Festival.

Fatma, Khaled and Aladdin: Part of the circus heroes and Seve's best friends. Aladdin is Seve's brother. They all come from Syria.

Ali and Seamus: Rodi's best friends and part of the Sirkhane School

Harshal and Soheila: An Indian dancer and an Iranian puppeteer, they are the closest artists to Seve

Seba and Hamzah: Directors from Lebanon, helped to build the show and the performance.

OUR CONCLUSION?

THIS PROJECT IS UNIQUE

- Its **narrative**, built from three very different characters, develops a **positive and constructive message**.
- The **delicate cinematography** creates an aesthetics that amplifies the magical context
- We will use **animations for the complex territories and the backstories** we cannot access with recorded images.
- Our **international, socially sensible crew**, matched the context we dived in, allowing us to create strong bonds with the characters.



The artists created an extraordinary show.

Despite challenging circumstances and the complex political realities of the region, **there are things we can change to make the world better**. As human beings, we must invest time and love in communities **to heal the wounds of poverty, displacement, and war**.

Performative arts and circus can be a seed to grow empathy, kindness, and resilience.

We need more spaces like the Flying Carpet Festival, places that teach the beauty of sharing and the value of patience as a language of love.

We need the entire world to know about this experience. And to replicate it.



WHO WE ARE

We are **an association that aims to use storytelling to address social and climate justice, human rights, and peacebuilding**. Through film, communication, and art, we seek to amplify the voices of vulnerable communities and highlight critical global issues.



Our mission extends beyond filmmaking; **we create, support, and promote audiovisual, media, and art projects with social impact**, looking for collaboration among artists, activists, and organizations.

We aim to **inspire change and stimulate meaningful discussions** on pressing social challenges.

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