

HEARTBREAK





Synopsis

Heartbreak is the name of a character of silence - mischievous and poetic - facing extreme violence.

Survivor of a terrorist attack that turned into war, Heartbreak, a mime and dancer, travels from place to place, listening to the voices of those he encounters.

Inspired by Buster Keaton and Marcel Marceau, Heartbreak is a hybrid film. A mute fiction, in black and white, struck by reality.

Why did I survive, unlike their son?



Note of intent

Tragedies, in war, exist on all sides.

To deny the suffering of some because of the suffering of others would be unfair. Journalists present different points of views, artists give shape to their true perceptions.

From October 2023 to October 2024 I lived in Israel, where my son had emigrated. So I was there on October 7.

The film was born of a heartbreaking scream on a night of December 2023. I ran out into the street, thinking someone's throat was being slit again. A crying teenager rushed into my arms. It was Sharon, my neighbor's daughter. Her mother had uttered that terrible cry of a woman to whom the death of her child is announced. Her son had been killed in a bomb explosion. The film is dedicated to him.





Heartbreak is the name of a man of silence, mischievous and poetic, confronted with evil and extreme violence. Played by a mime-dancer, Heartbreak's mute posture is apolitical, the narrative purely emotional.

All the actors wear masks... for their cathartic functions, in reference to the masked actors of ancient Greek tragedies. The protagonists embody no one in particular. Or everyone. Each viewer can project the features of his or her own feelings onto the smooth mask.

Through body language and despite the absence of face and speech, Heartbreak is deeply human. Moved and moving, he welcomes the words of “real people” he meets on his travels. Those approached are mostly survivors. People wounded in their flesh and spirit, who strive to resist with dignity. And who confide in Heartbreak, without embarrassment.

The film is an emotional journey through a specific time in Israeli society - from October 7, 2023 to October 7, 2024 - the first year of the current war. It evokes traumatic events that still strike at the heart of the Israeli people.



Asher Zelmatti

The main actor

Asher Zelmatti studied pantomime with Etienne Decroux (*Les enfants du Paradis*, Marcel Carné) and Marcel Marceau.

Marcel Marceau was a legendary mime, internationally famous, who survived the Nazi occupation and saved many children in WWII.

He was regarded for his peerless and moving style pantomime and was known as the « master of silence ». He also inspired Michael Jackson's moonwalk.

Asher Zelmatti says: "Silence is not absence. It is a space of welcome.

In Heartbreak, I am a silent witness. A body that receives. A gaze that listens.

My character doesn't speak, but he hears. He also feels in his flesh what words often fail to express. This silence is full. It is empathetic, inhabited, vibrant. It receives stories like a heart receives screams – noiselessly, but with intensity."







RABINOVICH FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS - TEL AVIV

Rabinovich Foundation reviews of Heartbreak

1. « An original, moving and theatrical approach to the October 7 tragedy. The interaction between the mime and the witnesses creates powerful moments. »
2. « The film deals sensitively with the wounds opened by the recent tragedy. A subtle and intelligent look at national pain. »
3. « The choice of a mute character, who expresses himself solely through dance and body language, allows us to move away from a strictly political positioning and, instead, focus on a universal emotional experience. The script is based on in-depth research. The film succeeds in offering a poetic expression of a trauma that is difficult to describe in words. »
4. « Impressive black and white photography. Highly polished visual work. »
5. « A topic of burning importance in Israeli society, the work offers a humanistic and artistic perspective that goes beyond partisan discourse to embrace the universal. »





Yann Dedet

French film editor of François Truffaut, Maurice Pialat, Philippe Garel, Maiwenn

«Reality is often dramatic, telling it even more so. In the hybrid case of **Heartbreak**, which I co-edited and which opened my mind to the living spirit of a people, two forms exist under the main axis of fiction.

In this interweaving of figurative and testimonial parts, the latter could appear to be played out by actors who, one wonders, might be excellent performers part of a highly rigorous fabrication.

Rarely have I felt, when editing, the beneficial confusion resulting from the homogeneous blending of two forms grasped by the same hand and homogenized by the same gaze, with no need to distinguish between them.

It's true that, at this level of horror, it's hard to believe in reality, hence the brain's instinctive flight to fiction, which provides distance.

This distance is precisely what this film invents, so that, without hiding our eyes or blocking our ears, we can place the film on the reflective side of a work of art capable of containing beauty and, beneath that mask, the most atrocious reality. »





Serge Bromberg

French producer, director, artistic director

«Thank you for sending me your film **Heartbreak**.

To say that it's a punch in the face is an understatement, and despite the political difficulties of showing such a film today I feel it's essential to make it known and share it.

This point of view is frank and sincere, leaving room for the testimonies and voices of witnesses encountered by chance, with respect and humility.

To experience the tragedy from the inside, without words, through your central character, is unbelievably violent. »







**We're here to celebrate the 5th birthday of Ariel Bibas,
one of the youngest hostages.**



Sophie Andrieu

Curator at the mahJ - Museum of art and history of Judaïsme, Paris

«Dear Jessica Vaturi-Dembo, I was very interested to discover your film.

The testimonies and scenes of demonstrations are an essential and terrible trace of the months we are going through. The character **Heartbreak**, a grieving father, has been with me ever since I saw your film.

Bravo for your courage in getting so close to this reality and giving it a cinematic form. »





Mina Mileva & Vesela Kazakova

Bulgarian filmmakers - Cat in the wall, 2019 - Women Do Cry, 2021

«We watched **Heartbreak** one night, on the road, in Austria. It is a film that really changes the perspective, a very necessary point of view.

And we saw it without stopping, we felt very absorbed. It's a beautiful and unusual work, fascinating. It gave us a feeling about this special Israeli spirit that so many people speak about, we have not been there to testify ourselves.

We felt the pain of the film's potential difficulty to premiere. Because its theme is very subversive. It gives a different perspective than the usual pro Palestinian one - which is also important but it seems like the official narrative now. Same as with our film - it goes against the current.

It is a tender work with a lot of heart. And it tells us things we did not know. We loved the mask faces and the choreography - it's free, and artistic. But the faces of these people who lost their children and close ones made a profound impression and stayed with us.

We cross fingers for the film! »



It's outside reality!



Testimonies

Ron Bahat

Survivor of Kibbutz Nir Oz

Rachel Duran

Mother of Josef Avner Duran, killed soldier

Talia Duran

Widow of Josef Avner Duran

Yael Klein

Mother of Elhanan Klein, terrorist attack victim

Batsheva Yahalomi

Survivor of Kibbutz Nir Oz, wife and mother of hostages

Yotam

Wounded soldier

Elad & Noa

Father & sister of the wounded soldier

Maya Izoutcheev

Survivor of the Nova Festival

Aviva Siegel

Survivor of kibbutz Kfar Aza, released hostage and wife of a hostage

Cohava Bard

A demonstrator





**And another baby girl was
born three months later...**

הגבורה 
פורום משפחות הנוסעים





Artistic list

Heartbreak (mime)

Heartbreak's wife (dancer)

Heartbreak (dancer)

Heartbreak's wife (mime)

Heartbreak's son

Heartbreak's first daughter

Heartbreak's second daughter

The old man (dancer)

A mother

The terrorist

Original music

Asher Zelmati

Mor Birger

Idan Kogan

Serah Zelmati

Ofer Peer, Yona Fitoussi

Shirly Khayat

Rachel Taieb

Shlomo Alfandary

Azamra Elisha

Michael Gold

Ilan Chouraqui



Technical list

Script, Direction	Jessica Vaturi-Dembo
Cinematographer	Yaniv Berman
Editors	Yann Dedet & Yaniv Berman
Assistant Editors	Minori Akimoto & Léonard Ledoux
ADR recordist	Michael Goorevitch
Sound Editor	Michael Goorevitch
Sound designer	Alexander Obrant
Foley artist	Elizaveta Balzhi
Colorist	Sergio Bezrukoff
Digital Laboratory	Red Pill Post-Modern
Executive Producer	Azamra Elisha
Graphics	Keren Elis & Hanan Offner
Translator	Myriam Bar
Special effects	Hanan Offner



A black and white close-up portrait of a woman with dark hair pulled back. She has a surprised or concerned expression, with wide eyes and slightly parted lips. The background is out of focus, showing a large circular object on the left and a doorway on the right.

**He told me they showed him
videos of October 7,**

Production & contact

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Jessica Vaturi-Dembo

Of French, Israeli, American and Italian nationality, Jessica Vaturi-Dembo began her career as a painter and visual artist, exhibiting mainly in Europe and Israel - solo and group shows.

She became a director after the death of her husband, filmmaker Richard Dembo.

Jessica Vaturi-Dembo has made three short fiction films, one short documentary, wrote a fiction screenplay and directed a five-part documentary series (five one-hour episodes).

Heartbreak is her first feature film

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