



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

The Wind Will Carry Us

The Wind Will Carry Us

(Bad mara khahad bourd)

Director: Abbas Kiarostami

Production Companies: MK2 Productions,
Abbas Kiarostami Productions

Producers: Marin Karmitz, Abbas Kiarostami

Location Managers: Asghar Rahmani,
Sadegh Khamooshi

Assistant Directors: Bahman Ghobadi,
Nasrin Askari

Screenplay: Abbas Kiarostami

Based on an idea by: Mahmoud Aydin

Inspired by a poem by: Forough Farokhzad

Director of Photography: Mahmoud Kalari

Editor: Abbas Kiarostami

Titles: Mehdi Samakar

Music: Peyman Yazdani

Sound Unit: Jahangir Mirshekari, Afshin Nazem,
Ali Noori, Hora Maleki

Re-recording Mixer: Mohamad Reza Delpak

Sound Editor: Mohamad Reza Delpak

Cast:

Behzad Dourani

Farzad Sohrabi

Shahpour Ghobadi

Masood Mansouri

Masoameh Salimi

Bahman Ghobadi

Noghre Asadi

Ali Reza Naderi

Roushan Karam Elmi

Reihan Heidari

Lida Soltani

Frangis Rahsepar

France-Iran 1999©

118 mins

The screening on Wed 6 Sep will be introduced by
Shohini Chaudhuri, Professor of Film Studies,
University of Essex

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Abbas Kiarostami has said recently that he's no longer interested in filming in interiors with artificial light. In *The Wind Will Carry Us* his devotion to landscape as cinematic spectacle seems, at first glance, to have overwhelmed the story. Not only does Kiarostami show us typically emblematic natural images, for the first time he has his characters refer to them. In the opening sequence, the strangers from Tehran look for 'a single tree' and 'the winding road' to help them reach their destination, a remote village in Iranian Kurdistan. But landscape in *The Wind Will Carry Us* is complemented, in a new way, by a complex, labyrinthine 'village-scape': the village, Siah Dareh (where the strangers await the death of Mrs Malek whose mourning ceremony they intend to film), is constructed across the fold of two hills so that its roofs are pathways turning into archways and connected to the steep streets by passages and stairs. Painted white with flashes of colour, the village is a perfectly designed set for a camera constantly on the move. The specific layout of the cemetery – where the crew's director Behzad talks on his mobile phone – also generates its own camera choreography, particularly the circular movements that follow him in one take around the summit of the hill. No one seeing this extraordinary camerawork would guess that Kiarostami and his cinematographer Mahmoud Kalari had fallen out during filming.

But *The Wind Will Carry Us* is not just a formal cinematic exercise. The story has been stripped down to the barest of elements, but while little 'happens', the film teems with everyday life. The empty spaces between the film's sparse events are filled with words, from poetry to local anecdotes, while the sounds of the animals in the village build into something like a music track. This lack of dramatic incident has its own narrative relevance, evoking the empty time involved in waiting for a death to come. Behzad is like an undercover anthropologist – with the endless questions he asks the villagers, he manages to throw some light on this remote place. He also provides the film's moments of comic relief, his struggle to find a signal for his mobile – his repeated run for his car and desperate dash up a nearby hill – has all the makings of a gag. In the cemetery at the hill's summit, however, the mood changes as the film addresses the theme of death; rather than turning black here, the humour simply falls away. Behzad's responses and expressions are central to the film but are difficult to read. He is a sympathetic narrator-observer on to whom a darker, more sinister side can also be projected.

In spite of its rich soundscape, extended, elegant camera movement, and near anthropological observation, the film is as much about what is not said and what is not shown. In discussing the film, Kiarostami emphasises his interest in making spectators take an active part in determining the meaning. Throughout *The Wind Will Carry Us*, certain people are heard only off screen. During his scenes at the cemetery, Behzad chats to Youssef, who is digging a hole and remains unseen throughout. Although his voice and his views on life give certain clues as to his character, the spectator is left to speculate about his actions and appearance and to fill in the off-screen space with his or her imagination. Youssef's invisibility is implicitly connected to the partial darkness that cloaks his fiancée, Zeynab. When Behzad goes to her house to buy milk, he is directed to a stable in a cellar. Descending into the gloomy space, his body gradually blocks out the light, leaving the screen totally black for several

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Out of Sight

Fri 1 Sep 20:30; Thu 7 Sep 20:35; Fri 22 Sep 17:55

Girlhood (Bande des filles)

Sat 2 Sep 16:00; Sun 17 Sep 18:30;

Mon 2 Oct 18:10

Il bidone (The Swindle)

Sun 3 Sep 12:20; Thu 14 Sep 20:45;

Sat 30 Sep 15:40

Hidden (Caché)

Mon 4 Sep 18:00; Thu 21 Sep 20:40;

Wed 27 Sep 17:50 (+ intro by Geoff Andrew,
Programmer-at-Large)

Notorious

Tue 5 Sep 14:30; Sat 23 Sep 11:45;

Sun 1 Oct 15:20; Tue 3 Oct 20:30

The Wind Will Carry Us

(Bad mara khahad bourd)

Wed 6 Sep 18:10 (+ intro by Shohini Chaudhuri,
Professor of Film Studies, University of Essex);

Fri 15 Sep 20:40

Ace in the Hole (aka The Big Carnival)

Fri 8 Sep 14:40; Mon 11 Sep 20:45;

Fri 29 Sep 18:00

The Killers

Sat 9 Sep 18:20; Tue 12 Sep 14:30;

Mon 18 Sep 20:50

The Maltese Falcon

Sun 10 Sep 11:50; Mon 25 Sep 14:40;

Tue 26 Sep 20:55

F for Fake

Wed 13 Sep 18:20 (+ intro by Jason Wood,
BFI Executive Director of Public Programmes &
Audiences); Thu 21 Sep 18:30

Barry Lyndon

Sat 16 Sep 19:30; Sun 24 Sep 14:30

The Kid with a Bike (Le Gamin au vélo)

Tue 19 Sep 20:45; Tue 26 Sep 18:05

Au revoir les enfants

Wed 20 Sep 18:00 (+ intro by film critic and lecturer
Dr Julia Wagner); Thu 28 Sep 20:45

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seconds. When he (and we) can see again, Zeynab is preparing to milk the cow by the dim light of a hurricane lamp. To pass the time, Behzad chats with her, then recites the poem 'The Wind Will Carry Us' by Forough Farukhzad. To cite Forough and discuss her poetry with a peasant girl is to introduce another powerful off-screen presence. Not only is she one of Iran's leading modern poets, but her tragic life is well known, especially her loss of her son in a divorce case and her death in a car crash at the age of 33. Kiarostami has said that 'her generous sensual philosophy had always seemed close to that of Omar Khayyám' whose poem in praise of the pleasures of life is quoted by a doctor later in the film.

Although the off-screen space and the darkness may well refer obliquely to the need for imagination and poetry in a society dominated by censorship, the significance of women in the film is striking. The two other strong women who cannot be seen are Tehran-based producer Mrs Godzari, to whom Behzad speaks on the phone, and the old lady who is dying behind closed doors, Mrs Malek. Behzad is caught, in some sense, between them. But the role of women in the mourning ceremony raises other questions. A young school teacher is the only person who discusses the ceremony with Behzad, to whom he tells the story of his mother, scarred twice by scratching her face to show superior grief. The teacher says: 'You may be interested in it. I'm not interested,' as though to relegate this brutal ritual to the darkness of a society in which a family patriarch and a husband's boss, whose relatives his mother was mourning, can cause such anxiety. But there is also the implication that such things should not be filmed. To see is not necessarily to understand, and – the implication might be – the demand for everything to be seen is simply the other side of censorship's coin.

The Wind Will Carry Us has shifted the emphasis of *A Taste of Cherry*. The twin themes of an enigma and death are there in both. But the spectator's curiosity has been directed away from an enigmatic protagonist's personal dilemma to wider issues of life and death present in Kiarostami's earlier trilogy of films (*Where Is the Friend's House?*, *And Life Goes On ...* and *Through the Olive Trees*) based on an earthquake that occurred in the area north of Tehran in 1991. Death as an aesthetic, as the point of narrative drive, is still there, but as in *A Taste of Cherry*, there is a coda. Behzad throws the thighbone that Youssef had given him as a mascot into a stream. As the water carries it along, this piece of lifeless death acquires a new ability to move and participate in life.

Laura Mulvey, *Sight and Sound*, October 2000