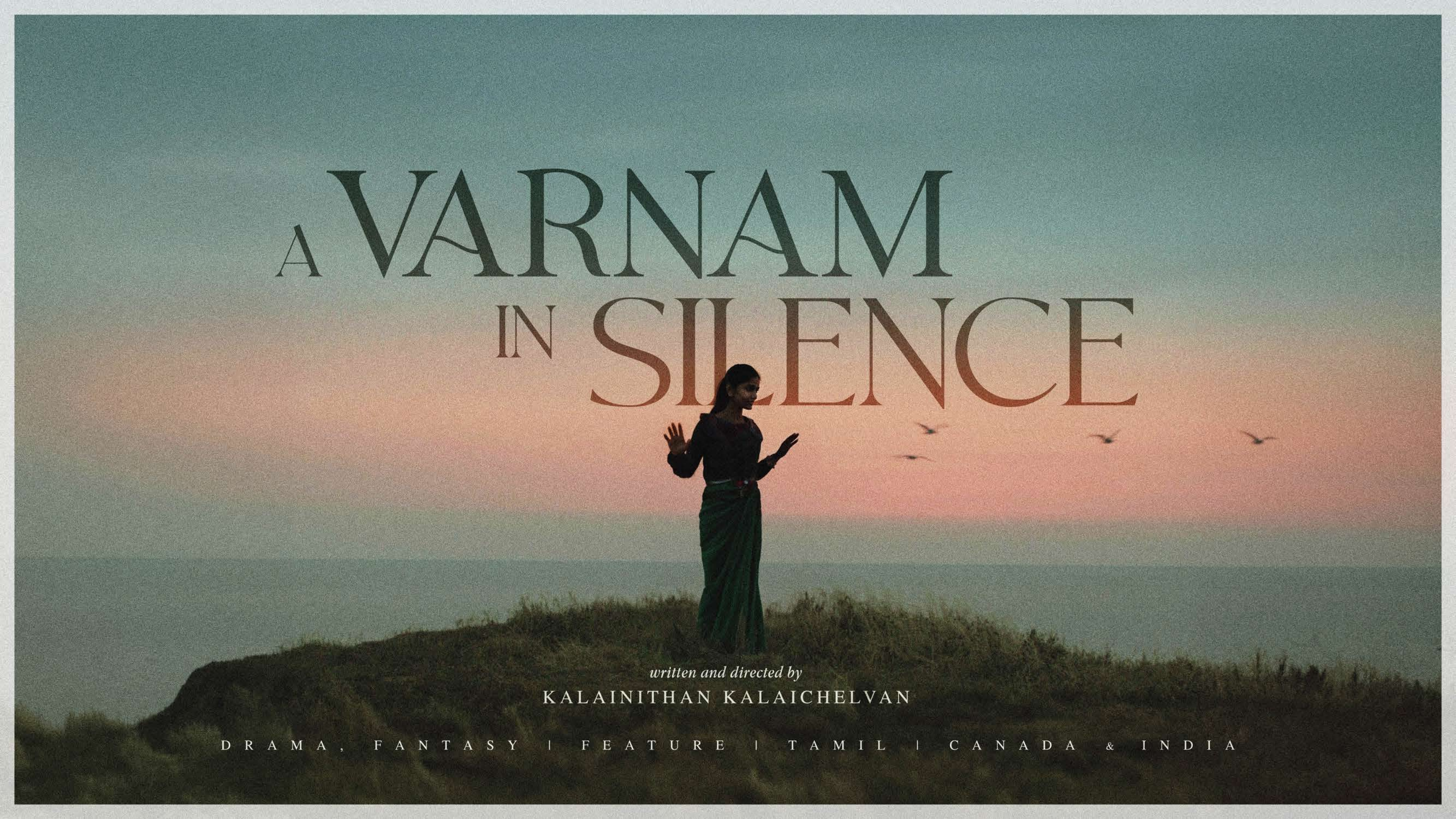


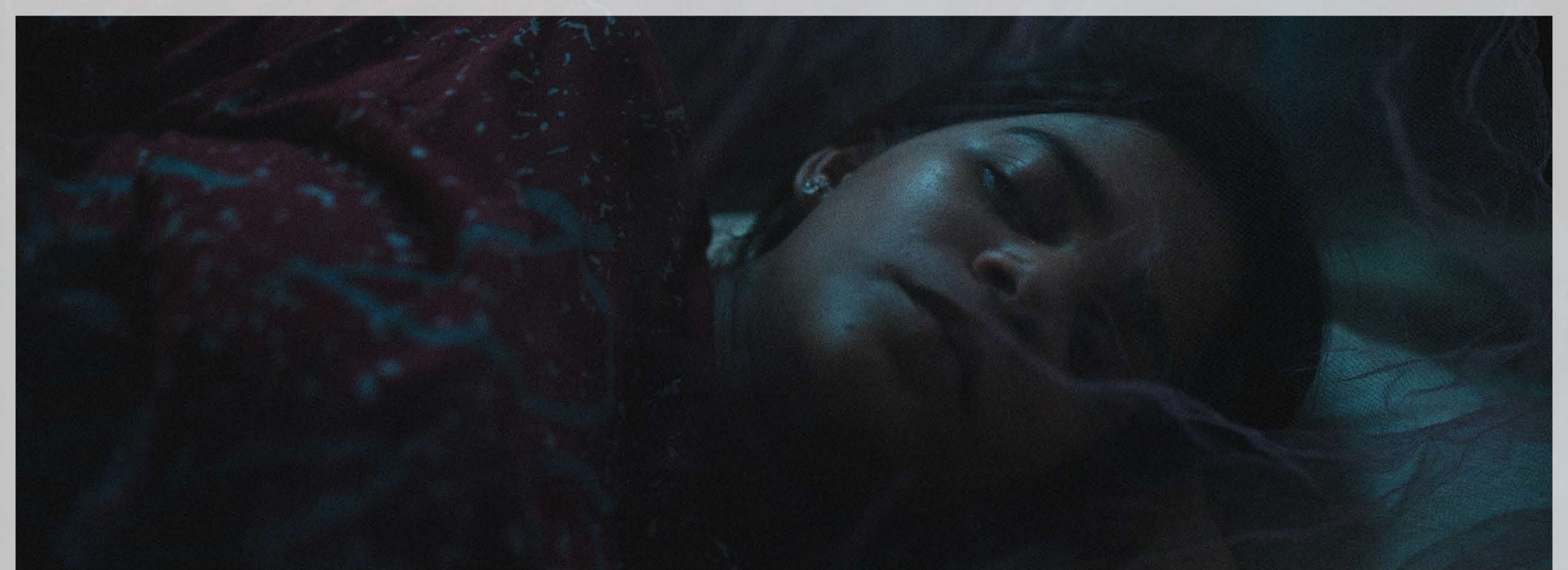
A woman in a green sari stands on a grassy cliff, looking out over the ocean at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and blue. Several birds are flying in the distance. The title 'A VARNAM IN SILENCE' is overlaid on the sky in a large, serif font. The word 'A' is small and positioned to the left of 'VARNAM'. 'IN' is smaller and positioned between 'VARNAM' and 'SILENCE'.

A VARNAM IN SILENCE

written and directed by

KALAINITHAN KALAICHELVAN

D R A M A , F A N T A S Y | F E A T U R E | T A M I L | C A N A D A & I N D I A



LOGLINE

After the funeral of her mother, a legendary Carnatic singer, a grieving young woman loses her voice, sparking her family's belief that it was not lost, but stolen.

Genre: *DRAMA, FANTASY* | Length: *90 MINUTES* | Shoot: *2026*
Format: *35mm / Colour* | Language: *Tamil (with English Subtitles)*

ABOUT THE FILM

While grappling with the sudden death of her mother, renowned Carnatic singer Annalakshmi, 25 year old Abhirami is struck mute. As her family struggles to comprehend her silence, an eerie phenomenon takes hold, her own voice echoes from an unseen distance. Drawn by the sound, she follows it and is thrust into a strange odyssey that bends the fabric of time. In an unfamiliar world where the sun refuses to set, she encounters a young girl who is the mirror image of her mother as a child. As reality fractures around her, Abhirami must find her way back home before she vanishes into the abyss.

This film is a fantasy drama that explores themes of grief, family, culture, legacy, music, and identity, all woven together through a deeply personal and surreal lens.







APPROACH

This film is intended to feel like a dream, one where the boundaries between reality and memory blur, where the past lingers in the present, and where the surreal seeps into the everyday. Embracing magical realism, the story unfolds with a quiet, uncanny beauty, allowing emotions to manifest in ways that feel both heightened and deeply intimate. Moments of the extraordinary exist not as spectacle, but as natural extensions of the characters' inner lives, reflecting their grief, longing, and unspoken desires. The world is textured, alive with symbols and echoes, inviting the audience to drift between what is real and what is felt.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This film began as a question: what do we inherit from those who came before us? Their voices, their burdens, their unfinished songs? And what happens when we lose those things, when we lose them? At its core, this is a film about grief. But not the loud, explosive kind. It's about the quiet grief that lingers in the walls of a home long after a loved one is gone. The way it seeps into everyday moments, reshaping the way we see ourselves. It's about the things left unsaid, the weight of expectations, and the way time folds in on itself when memory becomes our only form of survival.

I grew up in a Tamil conservative household, where tradition was both a source of comfort and conflict. Where family meant love, but also duty. Where art, especially music, was revered, yet came with an unspoken pressure to live up to something greater than yourself. This film is personal because it reflects that tension: the push and pull between honoring the past and trying to forge an identity beyond it.

Abhirami's journey is not just about finding her voice. It's about reclaiming ownership over it. She is a woman born in the shadow of her mother's legacy, trying to determine what parts of that legacy belong to her and what must be left behind. Her silence is both literal and metaphorical. It is grief manifesting physically. It is also the silencing of women, of generations told to fit into predetermined roles. The supernatural elements of the film exist because grief itself often feels supernatural, like time bending, like reality shifting under our feet.

The tone of *A Varnam In Silence* is inspired by the meditative atmosphere of Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Cemetery of Splendour* and the poetic introspection of Andrei Tarkovsky's *Mirror*. I want the audience to feel like they've entered a dream, a world that feels ethereal yet grounded in a deeply human struggle. Within its concise runtime, the film will be a tapestry of emotions, a haunting lullaby, a love letter to the voices we've lost and the ones we're still learning to embrace. It is an experience designed to be both reflective and profoundly moving.



PRODUCERS' STATEMENT

We are both continually inspired by Kalainithan's rare combination of emotional sensitivity, intellectual curiosity, and cinematic ambition. Treating grief not as an event but as an inheritance, something passed down through voices, rituals, and the things left unsaid between families. When we first read Kalainithan's script for *A Varnam in Silence*, we understood immediately why this was the story to build his first feature around. Kalainithan crafts Tamil folklore, memory, and emotional truth into a cinematic language that is both deeply rooted and universally resonant. His confidence in silence allows unspoken moments to become the heart of his storytelling. These qualities affirm our belief that his work will resonate not only with the South Asian diaspora, but with audiences around the world.

Karupy, a short film we produced, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2025 and continued its journey through Slamdance and Raindance and various esteemed festivals. Followed by another collaboration with the same team, *Till the Milk Runs Dry*, shot in Chennai last fall, aiming for its world premiere at a Tier-A festival in September. Watching our very culturally rooted shorts in Tamil tackling themes of family, silence, and inherited grief connect with audiences who had never set foot in a Tamil household reaffirmed something we've both come to believe as producers: cultural specificity is not a ceiling on how far a story can travel, it is the engine of it. At its core, this film is about what a daughter inherits from her mother when the words themselves go missing - grief, yes, but also legacy, expectation, and the quiet work of deciding what to carry forward and what to finally set down. Abhirami's silence is not simply a device; it echoes generations of women taught to hold their voices rather than use them. We were drawn to a story where the supernatural exists because grief itself so often feels supernatural, where a daughter must actually time-travel through memory and to reclaim something that was never truly lost, only silenced by circumstance and expectation.

This is where our partnership as producers finds its clearest expression. Across our work together and individually, we have built a practice around female characters who are allowed to be difficult, searching, and whole - never simply vessels for someone else's story. Abhirami, and the mother whose legacy she is untangling, continue that throughline for us, and it is something we remain deeply passionate about protecting in every project we take on.

Through working together, we have watched Kalainithan refine a cinematic language that is unmistakably his own, one rooted in Tamil culture yet emotionally accessible across borders. Each collaboration deepened our conviction that his first feature should preserve that same uncompromising artistic vision while expanding its cinematic scale.

Recent industry research on South Asian cinema found that fewer than 4% of major theatrical films have a woman in a department-head role across key creative positions. That gap is precisely why we have built our slate the way we have. Every production we have brought to screen together has been cast and crewed with over 70% South Asian representation, and we are now working to bring that same intentionality to who leads departments, not only who appears on screen. *A Varnam in Silence* continues that framework. A conscious effort to build community on both sides of the camera, not just in front of it.

This feature film is the beginning of a much longer collaboration as a team, and we are grateful to keep shaping stories, and the change they carry.



MAIN CHARACTERS

ABHIRAMI (Abhi), 25

A young woman caught between grief and an inexplicable loss. Once a singer with a voice that mirrored her mother's, she now exists in silence, her voice mysteriously stolen. Though she appears composed, grief churns beneath her surface, manifesting in quiet defiance and restless searching. She communicates through gestures and writing, but her emotions, raw and unspoken, speak louder than words. In her silence, she holds secrets... of sorrow, longing, and an unspoken determination to reclaim what was taken from her.

ANNALAKSHMI (Younger Version), 14

A girl brimming with life, ambition, and an untamed spirit. The voice that will one day captivate thousands is still growing within her, but her presence already commands attention. She carries the weight of Parandurai's musical legacy with effortless grace, balancing tradition and rebellion in equal measure. Though she is Abhi's mother, we only see her as a child, full of unguarded joy and stubborn determination. Beneath her laughter and curiosity, there is an unshakable sense of purpose, a girl destined to become something greater than even she can yet imagine.



SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

MANIKANDAN (Mani) - Late 50s

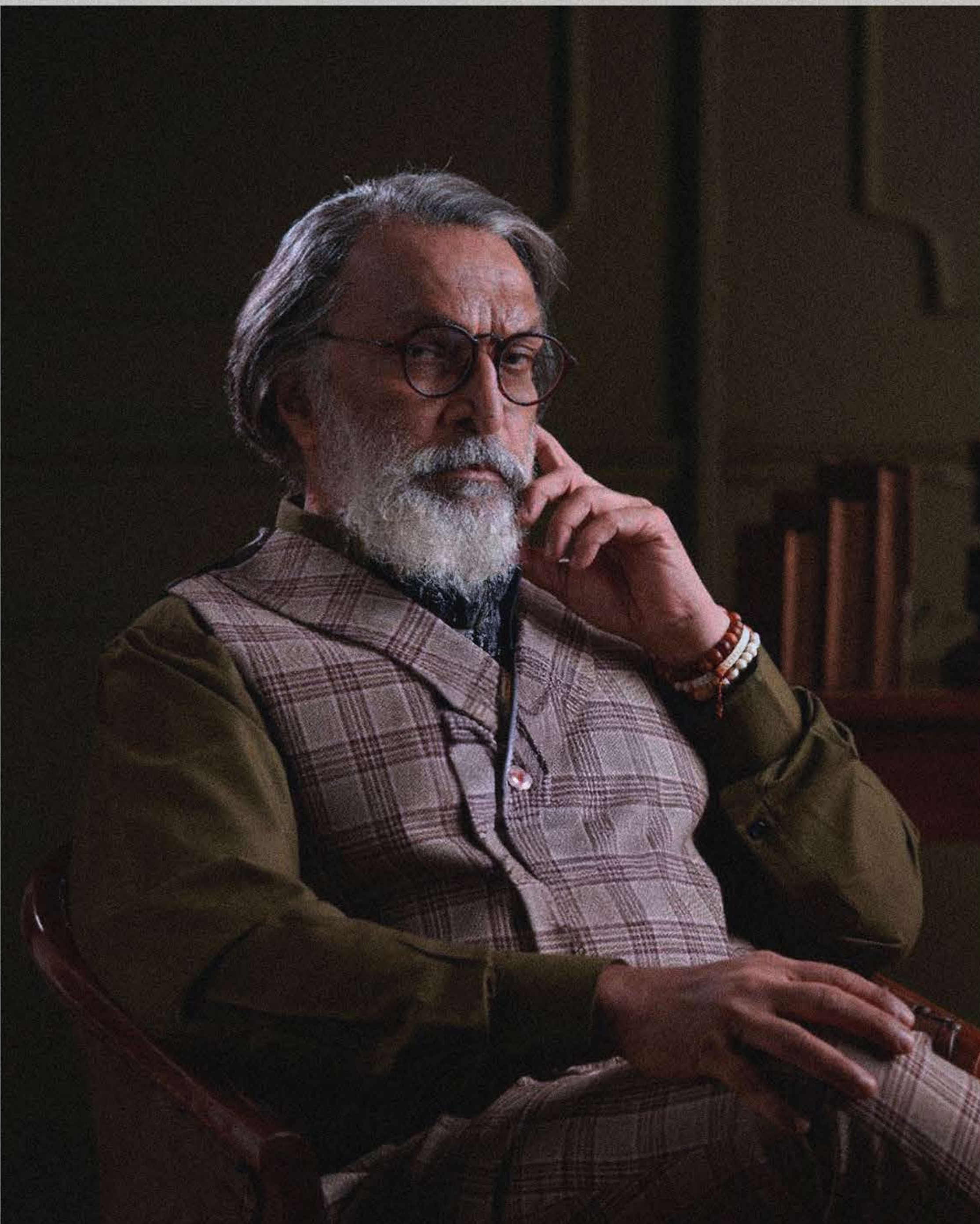
Abhi's father and the widower of Annalakshmi. A man weighed down by loss, guilt, and the lingering burden of never having been quite enough. His love for his daughter is fierce, though at times misguided. He masks his emotions with nervous energy, filling silences with uncertainty and self doubt. Once overshadowed by his wife's brilliance, he now struggles to carry her legacy, desperate to find a way forward. Despite his flaws, his heart remains in the right place, even as he fumbles through grief and belief.

UTHAMAN - Mid 50s

Mani's younger brother, a man of quiet intensity whose neatly trimmed mustache gives an illusion of wisdom. In truth, Uthaman is often clueless, relying on others, particularly his wife, Vidya, to navigate the complexities of life. He follows rather than leads, occasionally offering observations that teeter between simple and profound. Despite his lack of sharpness, his loyalty to his family is unwavering, making him a steadfast, if somewhat unremarkable, presence in Abhi's journey.

VIDYA - Early 50s

Uthaman's wife, and in many ways, the one who keeps the family from unraveling. She is pragmatic and perceptive, often seeing beyond what others choose to ignore. Vidya carries a quiet strength, rooted in a deep understanding of the world's unseen forces. She is the first to recognize that Abhi's lost voice is no ordinary affliction. A believer in the mystical, she straddles the line between faith and reason, leading the family toward answers they would not seek on their own.



NASSAR AS DHARMAN

NASSAR is one of the most acclaimed actors in India. He made his acting debut in a K. Balachander film in 1985, portraying a secondary supporting role, before moving on to play villainous roles. His breakthrough came through his performance as a police officer in *Nayakan* (1987), after which he became one of the most important actors in Indian cinema. He subsequently became a regular in Mani Ratnam and Kamal Haasan ventures. Nassar is well known for *Thevar Magan* (1992), *Bombay* (1995), *Anbe Sivam* (2003) and *Baahubali* (2015 and 2017).

DHARMAN is a hardened police inspector with a sharp mind and deep cynicism. He thrives in a world of order, and anything outside its bounds, whether stolen voices or supernatural forces, is simply a problem to be dismissed rather than solved.

SIMRAN AS PADMINI

SIMRAN BAGGA is an Indian actress, film producer, dancer, and singer who works predominantly in Tamil films. She has also appeared in Telugu, Hindi, Malayalam and Kannada films. She is the recipient of numerous accolades including three Filmfare Awards South and one Tamil Nadu State Film Award. In 2008, she played a pivotal role in *Vaaranam Aayiram* which won her the Filmfare Award for Best Supporting Actress. In 2019, she was featured opposite Rajinikanth in Karthik Subbaraj's *Petta* which became the highest-grossing film of her career. She starred opposite R. Madhavan in *Rocketry: The Nambi Effect* (2022) and worked in *Gulmohar* (2023), both of which earned her critical acclaim.

PADMINI is a woman of quiet authority and unshakable composure. As a teacher and guardian, she carries herself with a sense of duty, her discipline masking a deep well of love for her daughter, Annalakshmi. Beneath her stern demeanor lies a woman hardened by life's burdens, fiercely protective of both her family and their traditions.





SHOOTING STYLE

The film's visual language will be meditative and dreamlike, blending naturalism with subtle surrealism to reflect Abhirami's fractured reality. Lighting will shift between soft, diffused natural tones and spectral highlights, emphasizing the fluidity of memory and grief.

The camera will favor long, deliberate takes, framing wide shots with negative space to heighten Abhirami's isolation. Movement will be slow and controlled, using steadicam, dolly, and track, avoiding handheld techniques to maintain an ethereal stillness. Surreal moments will emerge through shifts in focus, time, and texture, making the world feel both grounded and hauntingly unmoored.

CELLULOID

The film will be captured entirely on 35mm with spherical lenses. The medium's idiosyncratic renderings are buried with subtle imperfections that add another layer of expressiveness and emotionality to the image. This format offers a richness of colour and texture that feels contemporary, yet timeless. It's organic and artisanal. Having worked exclusively with celluloid on previous projects, both on 16mm and 35mm, I know we can benefit from its warmth and quality of image while maintaining flexibility for a diverse range of scenes and moments.





PARTNERSHIP VISION

We are seeking Indian co-producers, financiers, distributors, and creative collaborators who are passionate about internationally positioned South Asian cinema and who are interested in building meaningful creative and industrial partnerships between India, Canada, the UK, and Europe. We are developing an arthouse feature rooted in emotionally resonant cinematic storytelling that explores grief, memory, identity, and spiritual inheritance through a deeply human and visually ambitious lens. This is a film driven by atmosphere, emotion, and cultural specificity, one that aims to feel intimate in its storytelling while expansive in its emotional reach. We are drawn to collaborators who believe in cinema that lingers, cinema that trusts silence, feeling, and visual language as much as plot.

A central component of our strategy is to pursue strategic co-production structures, beginning with the Canada-India co-production treaty, while also exploring possible partnerships in Europe that could strengthen a multi-territory framework and create access to talent, financing, and audience pathways across these regions. With principal photography planned in India -including Tamil Nadu, we intend to avail NFDC's International Co-Production incentive, further strengthening the financial case for partners entering the project at this stage. By bringing together collaborators from India, Canada, the UK, and Europe, we believe the project can occupy a unique space within the global film landscape while authentically reflecting contemporary South Asian experience. We are looking for partners who can support the project not only through financing and production infrastructure, but through genuine creative alignment and a shared belief in bold cinematic storytelling that is emotionally rich, artistically ambitious, and globally relevant.

This film is being developed to premiere at major international festivals while remaining emotionally accessible to audiences within India and across the global diaspora. We're seeking partners who champion auteur-driven filmmaking and understand the growing appetite for nuanced South Asian narratives - collaborators who can help the film resonate at festivals, within the Indian box office, and with diaspora audiences abroad. We're equally drawn to creative and strategic partners and financiers across Asia, Europe and North America, structuring the project as an international co-production that mitigates risk by building financing and audiences directly into the regions in which our stakeholders and communities already live. Beyond this project, we see this as the start of long-term creative relationships that strengthen artistic exchange between India and the international film community, and create space for daring, emotionally enduring cinema to thrive.

COROLLARY FILMS

A poetic, mysterious, and dream-like fable that challenges the way in which we view the world like **LA CHIMERA (2023)**.

A dazzling exploration of South Indian myth, folklore and landscapes that blend magic and realism like **KUMMATTY (1979)**.

An immersive, fantasy film told through vibrant, painterly visuals like **THE EVE OF IVAN KUPALO (1969)**.



WRITER - DIRECTOR

KALAINITHAN KALAICHELVAN is a Tamil-Canadian writer and director whose films have screened at festivals such as the Toronto International Film Festival, Slamdance Film Festival and Santa Barbara International Film Festival. His recent short film credits include *Till The Milk Runs Dry* (2026), *Karupy* (2025), and *Junglefowl* (2023). He was nominated for a Canadian Screen Award in 2026 and a Juno Award for Music Video of the Year in 2024. Kalaichelvan has participated in the Netflix-BANFF Diversity of Voices program and the Rogers-BSO Script Development Fund Program and has received support from the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, and Toronto Arts Council. He is a participant of the 2026 TIFF Directors' Lab and an alumnus of the 2024 CFC Norman Jewison Directors Lab.





PRODUCER

SHAISTA ROSHAN is an Indo-Canadian filmmaker raised in the UAE. Drawn to hybrid identities and the unique perspectives they offer. Founder of Shifting Sands Media her recent producing credits include *Karupy* (TIFF 2025, Slamdance 2026), *Queen Mother* (VQFF 2025, Reelworld 2025, Whistler Film Festival 2025), *Goodnight Grace* (CHFF 2023), and *Beyond the Wheel* (FCFF 2023). With over a decade of experience producing across MENA, South Asia, and the U.S where she has collaborated with leading showrunners on shows such as *The Greatest* (Amazon), *Tokyo Vice* (HBO Max), *Brilliant Minds* (NBC), *The Doctors* (CBS) she has also worked extensively on international productions including *Sabah Al Dar*, *Andama Yatil Massa & Dirhami* (ADTV). A current resident of the 2026 Red Sea Feature Films Program with her film *Unbraided*, her Series *Forgotten Queens* was also selected for Dubai Media Councils - DFGC & Amazon MGM Series Talent Program (2026) & TIFF's Big Pitch - Creators of Color Incubator (2024). She is also a 2024 alumna of the esteemed CFC Producers' Lab.



PRODUCER

ALISON ALMEIDA is a South Asian Canadian producer who is currently producing the feature film *The Temple*, directed by Calvin Thomas and Yonah Lewis, starring Daniel Zolghadri, Cory Michael Smith, and Vic Carmen Sonne. She produced Kalainithan Kalaichelvan's short film *Karupy* (TIFF 2025, Slamdance 2026). Her associate producing credits include Reza Dahya's *Boxcutter* (SXSW 2025), Hubert Davis's *The Well* (Fantasia 2025), Amar Wala's *Shook* (TIFF 2024), Durga Chew-Bose's *Bonjour Tristesse* (TIFF 2024), and Season 4 of New Metric Media's *Children Ruin Everything* (2025 CSA Winner Best Comedy Series). She began her career as a coordinator on acclaimed feature films, including Sofia Coppola's *Priscilla* (2023), Matt Johnson's *Blackberry* (2023), Clement Virgo's *Brother* (2022), and many more. Alison is currently participating in the CMPA Export Mentorship with Film Forge. She has previously participated in the 2025 Amazon-MGM Tasveer Producers Lab, where she won the Pitch Competition with **Dusky Fever**, the 2024 Whistler Film Festival Producers Lab, and the 2024 CFC Norman Jewison Producers Lab.

CINEMATOGRAPHER

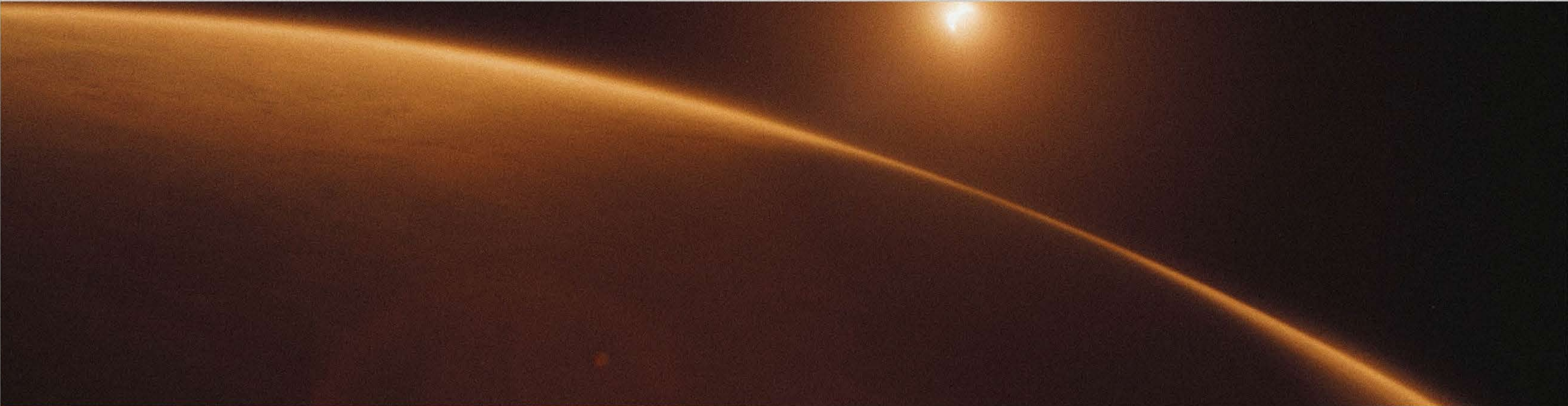
SHADY HANNA is a cinematographer born in Cairo, Egypt. He's currently living in Toronto, Canada, and working on narrative and commercial projects. He has filmed commercials for Nike, Adidas, Holt Renfrew, Canada Goose, and Toyota. He was nominated for a CSC Award for Best Dramatic Short Cinematography in 2023 and won the Best Cinematography Award at the 27th Brooklyn Film Festival. In 2025, he was named one of the "Rising Stars of Cinematography" by the American Society of Cinematographers. His recent narrative credits include *Karupy* (TIFF 2025), *Swan Song* (TIFF 2023), *Xie Xie, Ollie* (TIFF 2023) and *Sleep Talking* which was awarded Special Mention from the Jury at the Festival du Nouveau Cinéma in Montréal in 2024. He is currently working on the feature film *The Temple*, directed by Calvin Thomas and Yonah Lewis.



COMPOSER

KALAI SAN KALAICHEL VAN is a composer based in Toronto, Canada. He's a 2021 Fellow of the prestigious Sundance Composers lab and an alumni of the Canadian Film Centre that same year. Named by Ludwig Van as one of "six emerging Canadian composers to keep an eye on" and one of Playback's 10 to Watch in 2024, his work has been performed and premiered by celebrated ensembles such as Pro Coro Canada, the Dior Quartet, NMC Ensemble and Extended Music Collective. Kalaisan has scored films that have premiered at the Cannes Film Festival (*In Flames*), Toronto International Film Festival (*Karupy*, *This Place*, *Shook*), SXSW (*Seahorse*) and the AFI Film Festival (*Calabanta*). He is currently working on various commissions and scoring Simon Barry's Netflix series, *Bet*.





A VARNAM IN SILENCE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR
CONSIDERATION

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