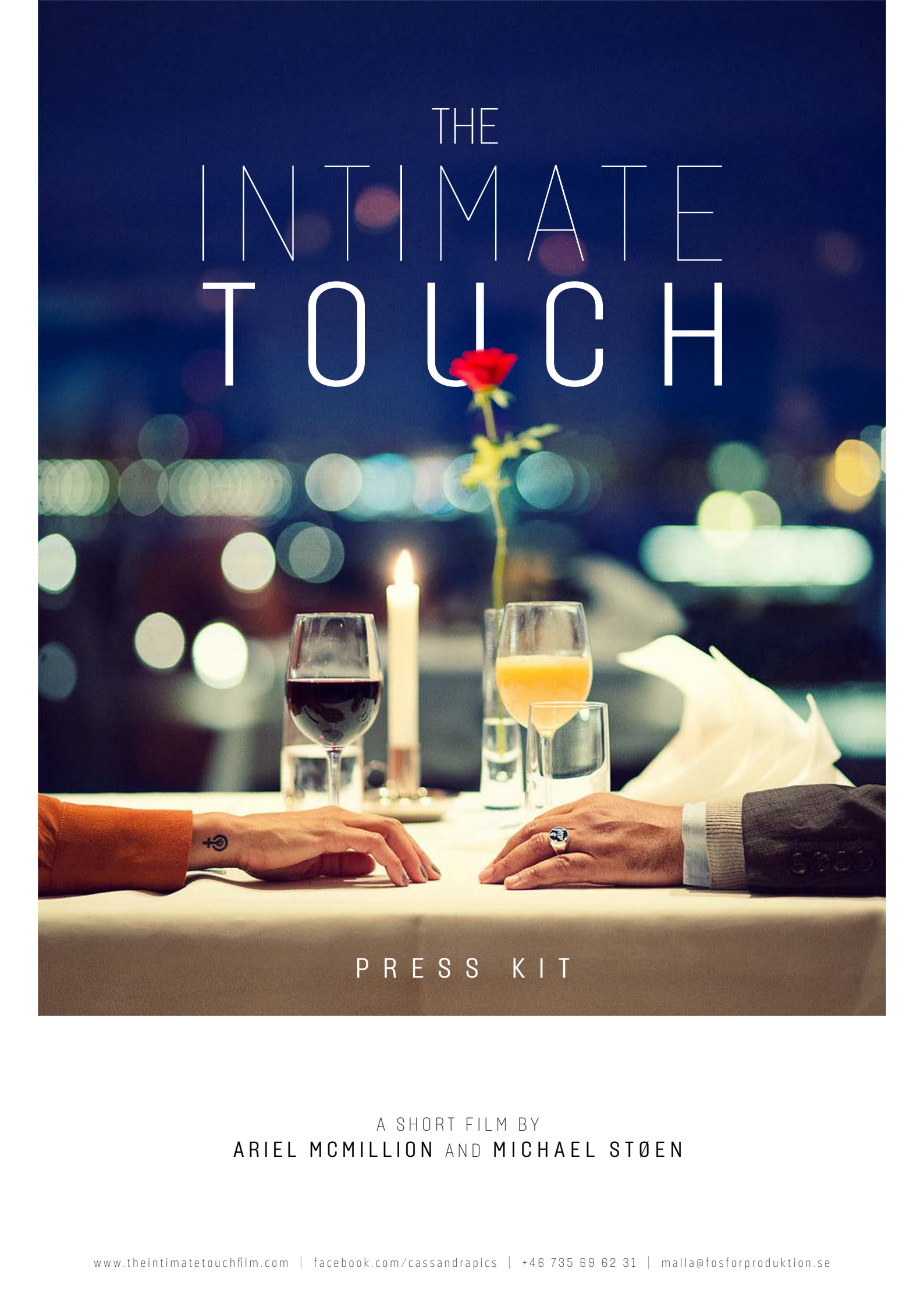


THE INTIMATE TOUCH

A romantic dinner table at night. In the foreground, two hands are visible on a white tablecloth. The hand on the left is wearing an orange sleeve and has a small tattoo on the wrist. The hand on the right is wearing a dark suit sleeve and a ring. On the table are two wine glasses, one with red wine and one with orange juice, a lit candle in a glass holder, and a small vase with a single red rose. The background is a blurred city night scene with bokeh lights.

P R E S S K I T

A SHORT FILM BY
ARIEL MCMILLION AND MICHAEL STØEN

LOGLINE

At a romantic restaurant, a feminist reporter and a Muslim refugee meet for dinner. Can their attraction survive their convictions?

SYNOPSIS SHORT VERSION

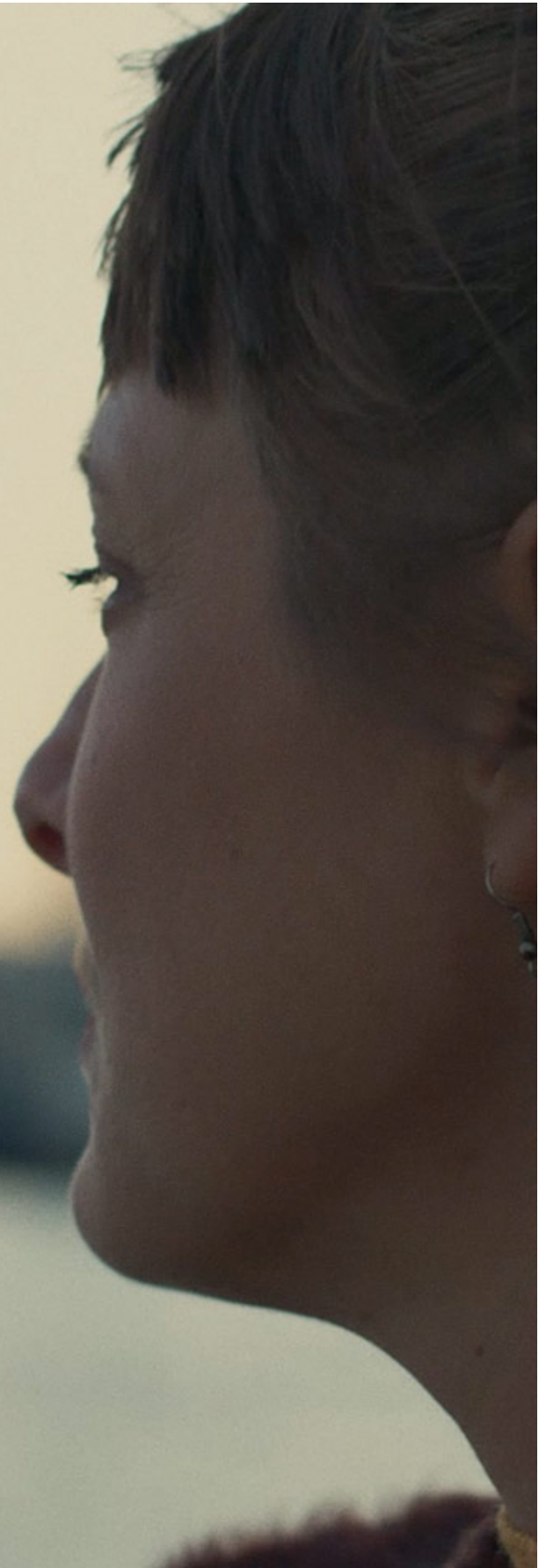
At a seaside restaurant, a conservative Muslim refugee meets a deeply feminist reporter for dinner. Officially, he's a source, and this is business. But what's really on their minds is the intense attraction they felt last week when they first met, despite a clash over his religious refusal to shake her hand. Tonight is a chance to pursue that attraction, if only they can navigate their convictions.

SYNOPSIS LONG VERSION

At a scenic seaside restaurant, Ingrid and Adnan are meeting for dinner. Ingrid is a reporter and activist with deeply feminist values, and a heart full of the pain of others. Adnan – a teacher and asylum-seeker – has a great sense of fun about him, and is also devoutly Muslim, with a conservative manner and worldview.

The formal purpose of their meeting is to discuss an article Ingrid is writing about a recent terrorist attack with connections to Adnan's asylum center. But what's really on their minds is the intense attraction they felt last week when they first met, despite a clash over his religious refusal to shake her hand – something she experienced as sexist, but which for him was an expression of respect.

Tonight is a chance, under the cover of a professional encounter, to fan the delicate ember of their attraction. After all, what's to prevent them from building a future together, apart from their own convictions.





DIRECTORS' NOTES

Ingrid and Adnan are both firebrands, clashing over ideology. At the same time, they are also allies, concerned with some of the same evils. So while at face value their relationship should be possible, at a subconscious level it feels forbidden.

That claustrophobic situation is what we were most interested in when developing and shooting *The Intimate Touch*. The film isn't about their arguments, ultimately. It's about the emotional conflict between and within them, as ideology stifles their connection.

This is interesting to us not just because of the current political climate, but because of our own experiences. We were both born into a strict religious community, which our family eventually withdrew from and rejected. Because of this, our upbringing occurred abroad, in isolated environments, under an ideological regime that placed severe limitations on education, freedom of physical movement, and personal expression.

But it was the unrelenting inner voice that left the deepest tracks. To be in a cult is to be constantly subordinating your deepest feelings to a belief system that is hostile to any thought or emotion not focused on achieving its mission. So the words you speak are controlled by what your doctrine claims is wrong, rather than what you feel is right.

Ingrid and Adnan are in that same position. At its heart, *The Intimate Touch* is a classic tale of forbidden love – but with one important difference: What's forbidding their love is not the world around them but their own moral convictions.



OUR WRITER-DIRECTORS



Michael Støen is a filmmaker and freelance videographer based in Gothenburg, Sweden, who has written and directed a number of independent short films. **Ariel McMillion**'s background is as a writer, visual artist, and commercial creative. After Michael directed a profile of Ariel's 2012 art project *A Station of the Liminal*, Ariel returned the favor by helping write and produce Michael's films *Den Andra Sidan* (2015) and *Mamma Therese* (2014). This fruitful partnership led to the joint development of *The Intimate Touch* from idea to finished film.

OUR PRODUCER



Malla Grapengiesser has a background in art, theater, and performance art, and was formerly a producer and CEO at Hysteria Film. In 2012, she founded Fosfor Produktion. Malla has produced award-winning films such as *Iranian Kidney Bargain Sale* (Nima Sarvestani 2006), and *Beauty Refugee* (Claudia Lisboa 2009), and was a co-producer of the Oscar-winning *Searching for Sugar Man* (Malik Bendjelloul, 2012). Her latest work is the feature documentary *Giants and the Morning After* (2018), which she both produced and co-directed (with Alexander Rynéus and Per Bifrost).

OUR CINEMATOGRAPHER

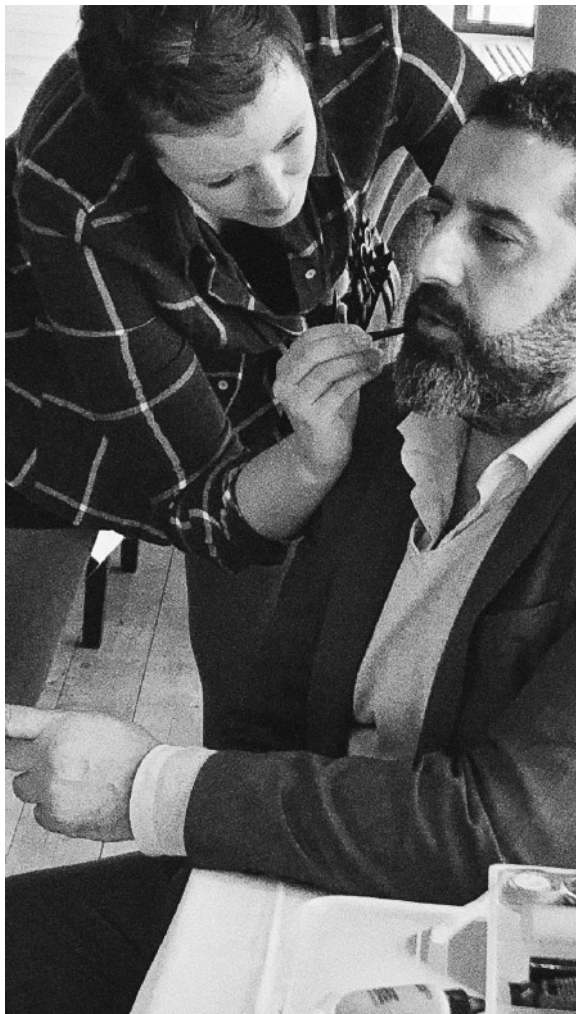
Sara Svärdsén is a graduate of the Valand Academy in Gothenburg, and is a respected D.O.P., with more than ten years behind the camera. Her most recent feature, *Kärlek & vilja* (Marcus Carlsson, 2018) won Best Drama at the Oslo Film Festival. Her previous films include *Det bor inga bögar i Bollebygd* (Mikael Bundsen, 2015) and *Water Bears* (Yenni Lee, 2018). Sara is based in Malmö, Sweden.



AS INGRID



Anna Harling was educated at Teaterhögskolan in Malmö 2001-2005, serving her apprenticeship at Norrbottensteatern. Since 2005, she has been in residence at Backa Teater, in Gothenburg, Sweden, performing in many of its productions, including *Jeanne d'Arc* (2017) in the title role. Anna Harling was one of the developers of *The Fruit of Knowledge*, produced in cooperation with the Borås City Theater, and in 2009 she was awarded the Daniel Engdahls grant by The Swedish Union for Performing Arts and Film for her role as Masha in Chekhov's *The Seagull*.



AS ADNAN

Isa Aouifia is a professional actor, director, and screenwriter, with a master's degree in international art-production and communication. He is fluent in 6 languages, including English and Arabic. He has a mixed background from France, Algeria, and Lebanon, but grew up in Sweden, studying at Teaterhögskolan in Stockholm from 1999 until 2003. Isa has a string of films and TV dramas on his resumé, including *The Laser Man*, and *To Love Someone*, and more recently *Ture Sventon and the Secret of the Bermuda Triangle* (2019), *First Responders* (2020), and *Bert's diary* (2020). As a director he has also interpreted Strindberg's drama *Miss Julie* for Teater Giljotin in Stockholm.



ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The script was deliberately constructed for a small production, in one primary location, with a small cast and crew, and simple lighting. There were six days of principal photography, all in 2019: two in May, to enable a night shoot for the closing scene, set on the pier; and four in July for the remaining scenes.

A dedicated core crew and production team, along with an experienced cast, enabled the shoot to remain on-schedule with relative ease. As very little time was available for improvisation on set, we relied heavily on thorough rehearsals and detailed storyboards.

The biggest production challenge proved to be the logistical one of providing food for the upwards of 50 people on set, including extras. Technical preparations and careful planning helped us navigate other challenges, such as the artificial rain, and shots where the performances were timed to coincide with the ferry schedule.

The Intimate Touch was made possible thanks in no small measure to the contributions of cast, crew and production members, as well as private and corporate donors, whose faith in this project kept it alive through many development challenges.



CAST

Adnan	Isa Aouifia
Ingrid	Anna Harling
The waiter	Rikard Björk
The boy	William Rapp
Fariq	Ashur Sargon

PRODUCTION

Written & directed by	Michael Støen & Ariel McMillion
Producer	Malla Grapengiesser
Co-producer / First Assistant Director	Johan Sellström
Director of Photography	Sara Svärdsén
Associate Producer	Ann-Sofie McMillion
Casting	Isabella Nerman
Production Coordinator	Johanna Blom
1st Assistant Camera	Andreas Gärdnert
2nd Assistant Camera	Catarina Albarella
Sound Technicians	Eric Guslén Gianluca Dolfi

POSTPRODUCTION

Editors	Michael Støen & Ariel McMillion with Patrik Forsell
Composer	Robert Lundgren
Sound Mixer	Christian Christensen
Colorist	Albin Abrahamsson, CAN Film

Presented by
FOSFOR PRODUKTION

in association with
MELONIA PRODUCTIONS and CASSANDRA PICTURES



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Duration:	19 minutes
Original language:	English, Swedish
Genre:	Drama
Aspect ratio:	1:85:1
Audio format:	5.1, stereo
Camera:	Panasonic Varicam 35mm





CONTACT INFORMATION

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IMAGE PACK

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