

BLACK SHEEP FILM PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS



# FİGTREE የጽላ ዛፍ

A film by Aäläm-Wärqe Davidian

WITH BETALEHEM ASMAMAWÉ. YOHANES MUSE. WEYENSHIET BELACHEW. MITIKU HAYLU. MARETA GETACHEW. TILAHUNE ASAGERE.

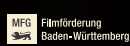
CINEMATOGRAPHER DANIEL MILLER. PRODUCTION DESIGNER DANNY AVSHALOM. EDITOR ARIK LAHAV LEBOVICH. MUSIC BY JOHN GÜRTLER.

JAN MISERRE. SOUND RECORDIST LUDOVIC ELIAS. SOUND DESIGNER DANIEL IRIBARREN. MIXING ADRIAN BAUMEISTER.

COSTUME DESIGNER MARINE GALLIANO. KEY MAKE-UP ARTIST NICOLE DUROVIC. LINE PRODUCER RAN FRIDBERG.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ETHIOPIA ABRAHAM HAILE BIRU. CO-PRODUCERS FELIX EISELE, SANDRINE BRAUER. PRODUCERS SAAR YOGEV, NAOMI LEVARI.

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Aäläm-Wärqe Davidian



Official Selection

**tiff**

Toronto International  
Film Festival 2018

# FIGTREE

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**A film by Aäläm-Wärqe Davidian**

2018 - Drama - Israel/Germany/France/Ethiopia - 2.39 - 93 min

Sales

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film marketing and publicity

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## Cast & Crew

Director	Aäläm-Wärqe Davidian
Cast	Betalehem Asmamawe Yohanes Muse Weyenshiet Belachew Mareta Getachew Mitiku Haylu Kidest G/Selasse Tilahune Asagere Rodas Gizaw
Cinematography	Daniel Miller
Editing	Arik Lahav Leibovich
Production Designer	Danny Avshalom
Screenplay	Aäläm-Wärqe Davidian
Sound	Ludovic Elias, Daniel Iribarren, Adrian Baumeister
Original Score	John Gürtler, Jan Miserre
Producers	Saar Yogev, Naomi Levari
Co Producers	Felix Eisele, Sandrine Brauer
Production Companies	Black Sheep Film Productions av Medien Penrose En Compagnie Des Lamas

### Technical Details - Fig Tree (2018)

Color	
Duration	93 minutes
Language	Amharic
Subtitles	English, Hebrew, French, German
Frame Rate	24 FPS
Aspect ratio	2:39
Shooting format	3.2K
Sound	5:1





## Synopsis

16 years old Jewish Mina, is trying to navigate between a surreal routine dictated by the civil war in Ethiopia and her last days of youth with her Christian boyfriend Eli. When she discovers that her family is planning to immigrate to Israel and escape the war, she weaves an alternate plan in order to save Eli.

But in times of war, plans tend to go wrong.

Davidian's coming of age film debut film is based on her childhood memories of a civil-war-torn Ethiopia.



## Director's Statement

On May 25th 1991, I had to unexpectedly leave my life in Ethiopia. I was an Orthodox Christian fourth grade student when my grandmother, Shui, suddenly appeared at Ras Abate Public School and asked me to accompany her home. On the way she told me that today we separate. She is sending me to Israel, following my biological mother.

I spent the first years of my life sheltered under my grandmother's loving wings. Through the gaps in her feathers, I viewed a magical world occasionally scattered with horror. I was 10 years old, only a few days before Mengistu Haile Mariam was overthrown, and despite of the rumors about an impending war, my incognizant last days in Ethiopia passed quite normally.

I'm going back in time to "Shula" (fig) neighborhood, the place where I was born and my personality and views of the world were molded.

Shula bounds between the village and Addis Ababa, a gray area of a modern society. It is populated by immigrants from various tribes and religions, who were fed up with the village life, but were not able to integrate fully into urban society.





Fig Tree portrays the lives of two Shula families, Jewish and Christian whose complicated life circumstances tied their fate and established an inseparable relationship, based on warmth and solidarity.

I think of the people I had loved and left behind, the friends from “Shula” neighborhood that died while trying to have a life and the ones that became refugees, unable to find a place to settle safely and peacefully.

Most of all, I want to tell the stories of the people that surround my memories and give a face on the lives of immigrants. While they might look happy and revived when they come to a new country, as if they achieved a goal, the truth is that for many of us, as for the Fig Tree’s heroine, immigration is not just a new beginning but also the end of an era and a personal tragedy.



## Producer's Statements

Fig Tree takes us through the life and routine under civil-war torn Ethiopia of an adolescent, a girl dictating a “normal” life of a teenager, one that laughs, dreams and loves, a curious girl with principals and faults. A whole world.

Fig Tree exposes the “moment before”, before immigrating or running away, before leaving everything and everyone behind – loved ones, language, culture, tastes and textures.

Life has taught us, and this film emphasizes it, that there is a very thin line between being an immigrant and a refugee.

Director Aälām-wärqe Davidian was one of these “immigrants/refugees”, escaping Ethiopia when she was 11 years old. In addition to living those very moments portrayed in the film, Aälām-wärqe is an incredibly sensitive storyteller with a touch for visual and audio details that add up to a new in-depth picture of life. We are enthusiastic to share her vision with the world via her debut feature film.





Besides being a challenging story taking place during war, the film had another huge challenge as it was entirely shot on location in Ethiopia. Our preliminary visits had taught us that we are stepping into a new terrain; poor with local experience on a large scale films but rich with passion and possibilities. Fig Tree is a delicate combination of talent coming from different countries together with local ambitions as well as unique textures, sights and sounds.

Finally; even though the film is set “far away”, the plot is clear and the characters vital and beloved. The film is dynamic and in constant movement just like its lead character. This is a piece of life rather than a “postcard from Africa”. We are positive that the geographical distance will be quickly forgotten because Aäläm-wärqe , like any good director, speaks the language of human feelings which appeals to all of us.

**Naomi Levari & Saar Yogev, Black Sheep Producers.**



## Short Biography



### Aäläm-Wärqe Davidian

Aäläm-Wärqe Davidian was born in Awash, Ethiopia. She studied cinema at Sam Spiegel Film & Television School. She has directed the short films *Transitions* (2016) and *Facing the Wall* (2016). *Fig Tree* (2018) is her feature directorial debut.

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FILMS *Boutique*