

Press kit

# HODA

## mother on hold



documentary

director rabelle erian

producer felizitas hoffmann

**Hoda (55), an Egyptian choir singer, has always wanted to be a mother despite being infertile. Filling the void for the past twenty years, she has raised a young girl living in a Coptic Christian shelter as her own daughter. When the teenage girl decides to find an escape in marriage, Hoda starts to fight for her like a true mother.**



**"I've been through it all.  
Sexual assault? Yes. Estrangement?  
Sure.  
Underemployment? You bet.  
You just have to get back,  
put yourself together and move on."**

# Synopsis



## HODA mother on hold

Hoda (55) is a glamorous choir singer, a firm Coptic Christian believer and a fierce fighter against all hardships. She has seen it all before: sexual assault, underqualified jobs, migration, estrangement and starting over from scratch. However, Hoda has never experienced motherhood in the traditional sense. Due to infertility and the lack of effective medical solutions at the time she was never able to conceive children. Hoda volunteers in the Coptic children's shelter "House of Angels" where she meets Mariam and her heart opens up to a new form of love: Hoda loves Mariam unconditionally as if she were her own daughter. She recognises her young self in Mariam in various ways - they even look similar. Ultimately, adopting Mariam has never been an option due to adoption restrictions under Egyptian law. Moreover, the Coptic nuns at the shelter, the "Tasonis", would never allow in-group favoritism between the girls. Yet, Hoda manages to visit

Mariam every day and her attachment to Mariam has adamantly grown over the course of their relationship of 20 years.

Meanwhile, Hoda is also responsible for her aging mother, who lives in the same building. Their relationship has always been contentious since Hoda's childhood. Despising her own mother, Hoda's life increasingly evolves around Mariam. Naturally, Mariam falls in love and wants to break free from the shelter by marrying her boyfriend. Hoda vehemently disapproves of this relationship thinking Mariam is too young for such a commitment and wants to protect her by all means. In fighting for Mariam, Hoda embarks on a journey of self-discovery and questions her urge for motherhood.





## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

DOCUMENTARY

30:00 minutes

16: 9

2k - DCP

arabic

with English or German subtitles

a production by Felizitas Hoffmann  
and University of Television and Film  
Munich

financially supported by  
FimFernsehFonds Bayern  
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Freundeskreis HFF München e.V.

### Main Protagonists

Hoda Stefanos

Mariam Sami

Laila Nicholas

### Main Crew

Director - Rabelle Erian

Producer - Felizitas Hoffmann

DOP -Rita Hajjar

1AC - Elsy Hajjar

Dramaturgy & Montage -Ahmed

Abdel Mohsen & Rabelle Erian

Soud - Nana Zaki

Sound Design and Mix - Miguel Reis

Colorgrading - Natalie Helgath

Music - Tarek el Azhary

Graphic Design - Ahmed Hammoud

2023

## Felizitas Hoffmann

producer



### Biography

Felizitas Hoffmann is a director, producer and visual artist whose work combines journalism, photography, documentary film and video art. Felizitas has produced and directed several short films, which went on to screen at prestigious film festivals worldwide. In 2017, she co-founded the art collective Hybris with Natalia Jobe & Theresa Hoffmann. Hybris is currently working on the media art project 'fake it till you break it', which researches the role of deepfakes used as image-based sexual abuse and is supported by the scholarship 'Medienkunst der Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film München (HFF), ermöglicht durch die Kirch Stiftung und Frau Regina Hesselberger'. Felizitas studies Documentary Film and Television Journalism (Dipl.) at the University of Television and Film Munich (HFF). She is currently working on her graduation film the weight of the moon(WT).

### Filmography - selection

2022, Love at first byte  
2022, The Last Dance  
2020, The Big Bubble  
2020, Billboards to Cairo

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## Rabelle Erian

director



### Biography

Rabelle Ramez Erian's is a filmmaker, dramaturg and translator. Rabelle was born and raised in Cairo, Egypt, and moved to Munich, Germany in 2010 to study Art and Multimedia at the Ludwig Maximilian University. After obtaining her Bachelor of Arts degree, she enrolled at the University of Television and Film in Munich to study filmmaking. She currently holds a German Diploma in documentary film directing and journalism for television. During her studies, she was awarded a scholarship by the Petra Matusche Foundation. Since 2015, her work has been screened at several international film festivals, including Loikka Dance Film Festival in Helsinki, Dok.fest in Munich, and Festival dei Popoli in Florence. In parallel she joined the production team of the Open Border Ensemble at the State Theater "Münchner Kammerspiele". In 2021 she worked as a dramaturg assistant and digital producer at the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin.

### Filmography - selection

2020, For the record, my love  
2020, Billboards to Cairo  
2017, COUZ

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## Rita Hajjar

DOP



### Biography

Rita is a cinematographer with feeling for documentary and narrative films. She occasionally indulges her loved ones with analog stills. Rita was born and raised in Lebanon, and moved to pursue undergraduate study in Munich, Germany. For its endless opportunities and captivating cultural diversity, Rita chooses to reside there at the moment. Rita currently holds a Diploma in cinematography from the University of Television and Film in Munich.

### Filmography - selection

2023, Eine Person Ex  
2023, Liquid Gold  
2022, Gott ist ein Käfer  
2020, Erbarme dich unser

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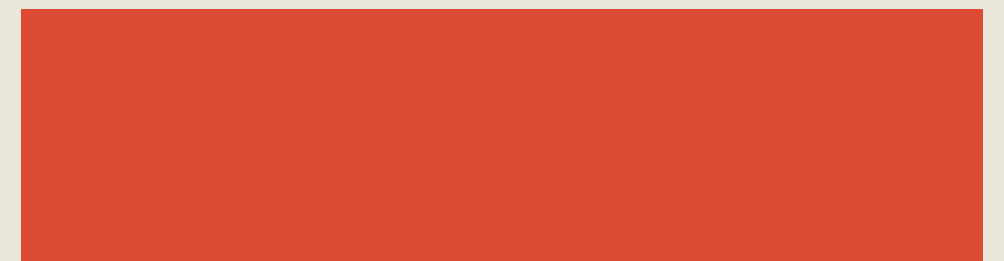
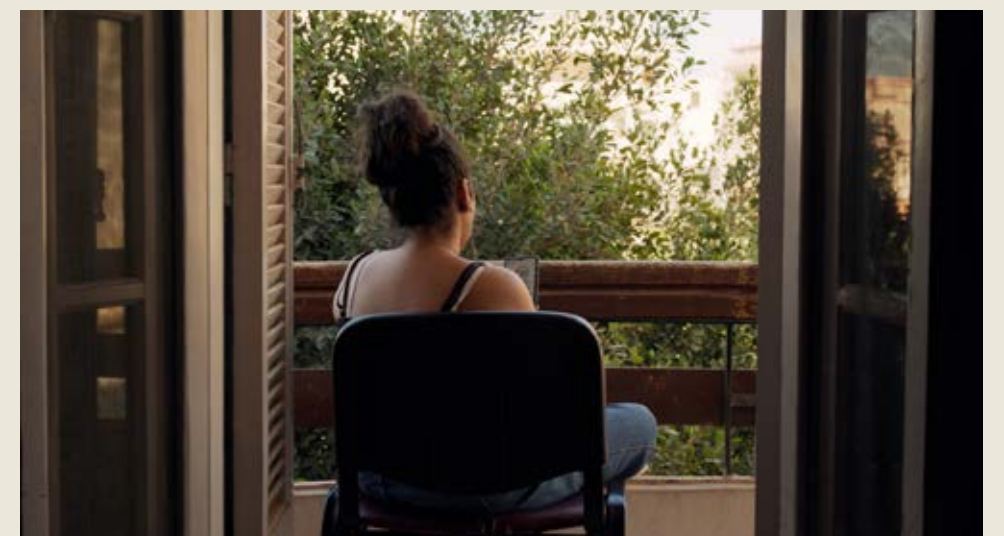


# Director's Note

**Set in Cairo, the mega-metropolis and the place where I was born and raised, the story of Hoda, Laila, and Mariam is about three resilient women in my family. Spanning across three different generations, I witness them balancing their roles as mothers, daughters, and friends. Navigating through conflict, past traumas, and apologies left unsaid, I try to understand different forms of love, family ties, womanhood, and solidarity. Transcending generational differences, I am inspired by each character and their distinct qualities.**

Hoda values her freedom and creativity even though being a single childless woman well into her late fifties brings her a great deal of societal scrutiny. Traditionally, women in Egypt are expected to be wives, childbearers, and caretakers. Hoda navigates societal expectations and finds a way to live on her own terms. Mariam, whom Hoda considers a daughter, is a determined and intelligent university student in her late teens, who grew up in a Coptic Christian shelter for young girls from disadvantaged backgrounds. She finds solace in someday escaping the confined world of the shelter by getting married and starting her own family. Finally, Laila, Hoda's mother, is an old and lonely woman, who has spent her adult years in a loveless marriage, which has left her feeling isolated and unfulfilled. Laila looks back on the difficult times she has endured as a young woman and shares her experience and transformation throughout her long life. As diverse as the lives of the three women might be, Hoda, Mariam, and Laila are united in standing up for themselves and forging their own path in life, both through the support and despite the challenges of their families.

Telling this story has opened my eyes to multi-layered perspectives on my own culture and the women that shape it. As Coptic Christian women, they face challenges within a predominantly Muslim and patriarchal society. As a religious minority in Egypt, Coptic Christians follow their strict religious traditions and practices, but legally still have to adhere to Egyptian law, of which large parts are inspired by Islamic doctrine. One of them being the prohibition of adoption: Hoda cannot legally adopt Mariam in Egypt. Challenged by a restrictive system and normative relationship models, Hoda and Mariam form a close mother-daughter bond through a deep sense of love and trust. My journey for this film begins here, as I strive to comprehend the magnitude of deliberately choosing a non-biological child to be your own and the unique bond that comes with it.



Hoda  
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## **CONTACTS**

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