

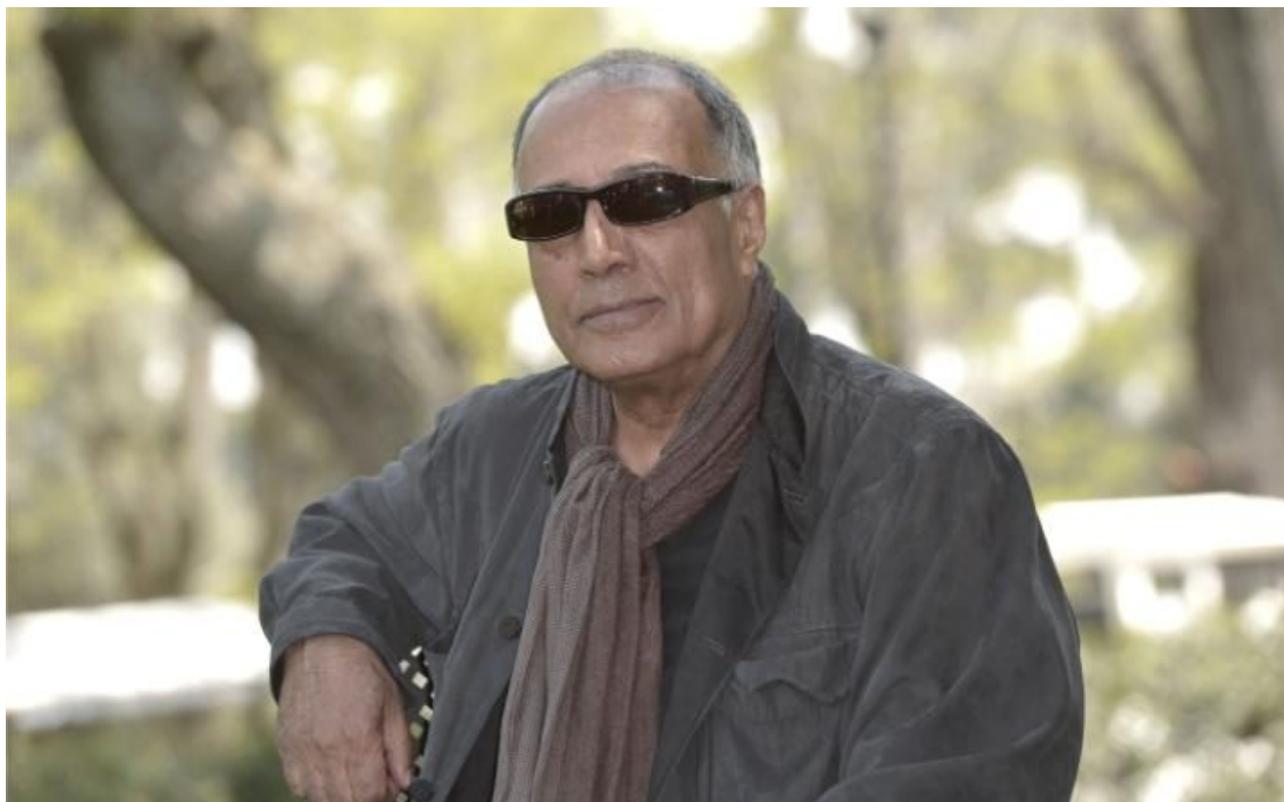
BRITS IN SÃO PAULO

Meet British Expats in São Paulo. Join our Expat Community Now!



Home > Obituaries

Abbas Kiarostami, film director – obituary



Abbas Kiarostami CREDIT: REX FEATURES

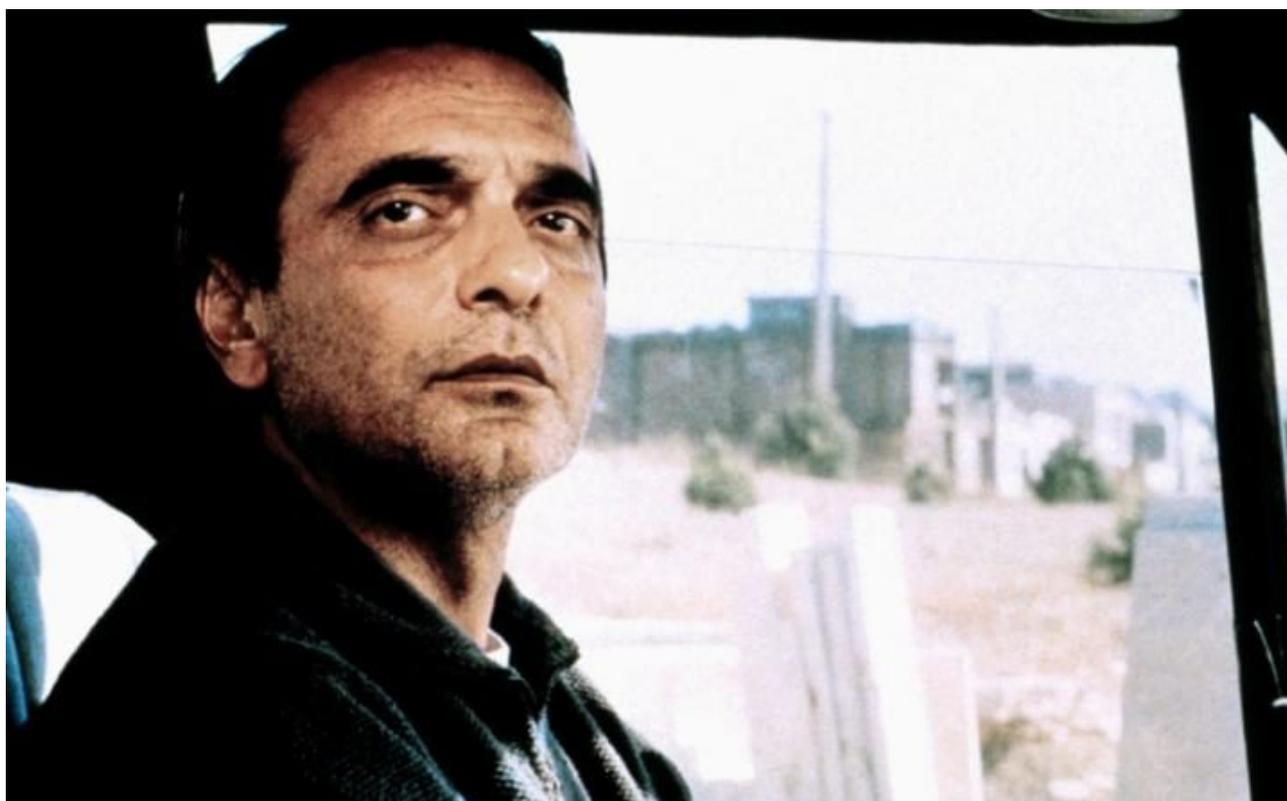
5 JULY 2016 • 5:28PM

Abbas Kiarostami, who has died aged 76, was an influential film director and the only Iranian ever to win the Palme D'Or at Cannes; he received the award for Taste of Cherry

(1997), a minimalist film about a man driving around the suburbs of Tehran looking for someone to bury him after he has committed suicide.

The audience never learns why the protagonist Mr Badii (Homayon Ershadi) wants to kill himself and he reveals little to the three people he picks up in the hope that they will perform the burial. By the end of the film, moreover, little more light is shed on proceedings; Badii lies in his grave during a thunderstorm, after which there is footage of Kiarostami and his crew making the film.

The film epitomised Kiarostami's reflective and occasionally unsettling film-making style, dominated by long shots, long takes and long silences. Dusty, suburban Tehran sprawls beyond Badii's car, contrasting with the close ups of Baddii himself. And despite the film's leisurely pace, it is infused with an unnerving undercurrent of suspense.



Homayon Ershadi in Kiarostami's *Taste of Cherry* (1997) CREDIT: WWW.ALAMY.COM

Taste of Cherry was not greeted with universal acclaim, particularly in America, where the critic Roger Ebert dismissed it as “excruciatingly boring”. It was robustly defended, however, by many who saw Kiarostami as one of the greatest film-makers of the 1990s, a sophisticated auteur and a master at portraying the human condition.

“In my films,” Kiarostami explained in 2013, “I try to give people as little information as possible, which is still much more than what they get in real life. I feel that they should be grateful for the little bit of information I give them.”

The son of a painter of frescoes, Abbas Kiarostami was born in Tehran on June 22 1940. Initially he pursued his artistic interests through art and graphic design, which he studied at the University of Tehran.

In the 1960s he found work as a commercial artist. He went on to shoot television advertisements, as well as illustrating children's books. In 1969 he helped to set up a film-making department at the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in Tehran. His first film, *The Bread and Alley* (1970) – a 10-minute black and white short about a boy confronting a hungry dog as he brings home a loaf of bread – was for the Institute, and was followed by *Breaktime*, another snapshot of childhood (this time about a boy who has been sent home from school for breaking a window) in 1972.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s Kiarostami continued to develop his filmic style, making simple, realistic short films, often about children and the moral choices they face when dealing with what appear to be life's everyday dilemmas.



Abbas Kiarostami in 2015 CREDIT: REX FEATURES

Unlike many of his contemporaries in the Iranian new wave of film-makers, Kiarostami did not leave his country after the 1979 Islamic revolution. He lived and worked in Iran and – with the exception of his most recent work which was filmed outside the country – created films which evaded the Iranian censors.

He did not begin to receive international attention until *Where Is the Friend's Home?* (1983), the story of a child returning his friend's notebook to a nearby village. The film formed part of what became known as the Koker trilogy, because it featured, along with *And Life Goes On* (1992) and *Through the Olive Trees* (1994), the village of Koker in northern Iran.

Close-Up (1990) was greeted with lukewarm reviews in Iran but was hailed by many on the international film scene as Kiarostami's masterpiece. The film told the story of the real-life trial of a conman who had impersonated the film-maker Mohsen Makhmalbaf, and it featured all the characters from the real story playing themselves.





Kiarostami (left) with Juliette Binoche and William Shimell at the premiere of *Certified Copy* in 2010 CREDIT: REX FEATURES

After the success of *Taste of Cherry*, Kiarostami made *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999), an examination of tradition in a Kurdish village through the eyes of visiting journalists, which won the Silver Lion at the Venice International Film Festival. In 2001 he made *ABC Africa*, a documentary about Ugandan children orphaned by the Aids epidemic, and the following year he directed *Ten*, which comprised 10 scenes in which a female driver picks up various passengers during a car journey through Tehran, gently exploring, through the conversations that take place, the problems facing women in Iranian society. Like *Taste of Cherry*, the film used the simple setting of a car journey – where conversation is unfettered by the usual social conventions.

Collaborations with the British director Ken Loach and the French actress Juliette Binoche followed, including *Certified Copy* (2010) in which Juliette Binoche starred opposite William Shimell and which followed the development of a relationship between a British writer and a French antiques dealer during the course of a day.

Abbas Kiarostami's final film, *Like Someone In Love* (2012), told the story of the relationship between a prostitute and her elderly client, a retired university professor.

Rarely seen without sunglasses because of a sensitivity to light, Kiarostami embraced countless other artistic ventures including photography, experimental video work and poetry. In 2002 he published *Walking with the Wind*, a collection of haiku-like poems. In 2008 he staged a production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* for ENO at the Coliseum, using spectacular filmed backdrops.

The opera was overshadowed, however, by delays to Kiarostami's British visa, and he worked on the production in absentia from Iran, directing the cast via emails and telephone calls.

Kiarostami married Parvin Amir-Gholi in 1969. The marriage was dissolved in 1982. Their two sons survive him.

Abbas Kiarostami, born June 22 1940, died July 4 2016



Follow the latest Telegraph Obituaries news



The Telegraph

Like Page 3.4M likes

Follow @Telegraph

READ MORE ABOUT:

IRAN

KEI

Promoted stories



Procurando por eficiência no gerenciamento operacional?

Dell



Hacker Disruptions as Big Business, Complete with...

Recommended by



Procurando por soluções de armazenamento? Confira

Dell



The most addictive game of the year! Build your city!

Forge Of Empires



Back With Bieber? Kourtney Kardashian Caught At Justin's...

Radar Online



This game will keep you up all night!

Stormfall



Sponsored



Managing your currency exposure

Here's a step by step guide on how to recognise and manage your currency risk

[Read more >](#)



Tennis serves up a sweet sponsorship deal

Harness tennis' true potential: rally followers, drive affinity and convert fans into customers

[Read more >](#)





The Telegraph
Gin
EXPERIENCE
Perfectly mixed with

FEVER-TREE

AUGUST 2 AND 3, 2016
THE ROOF GARDENS IN
KENSINGTON, LONDON

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

Obituaries latest



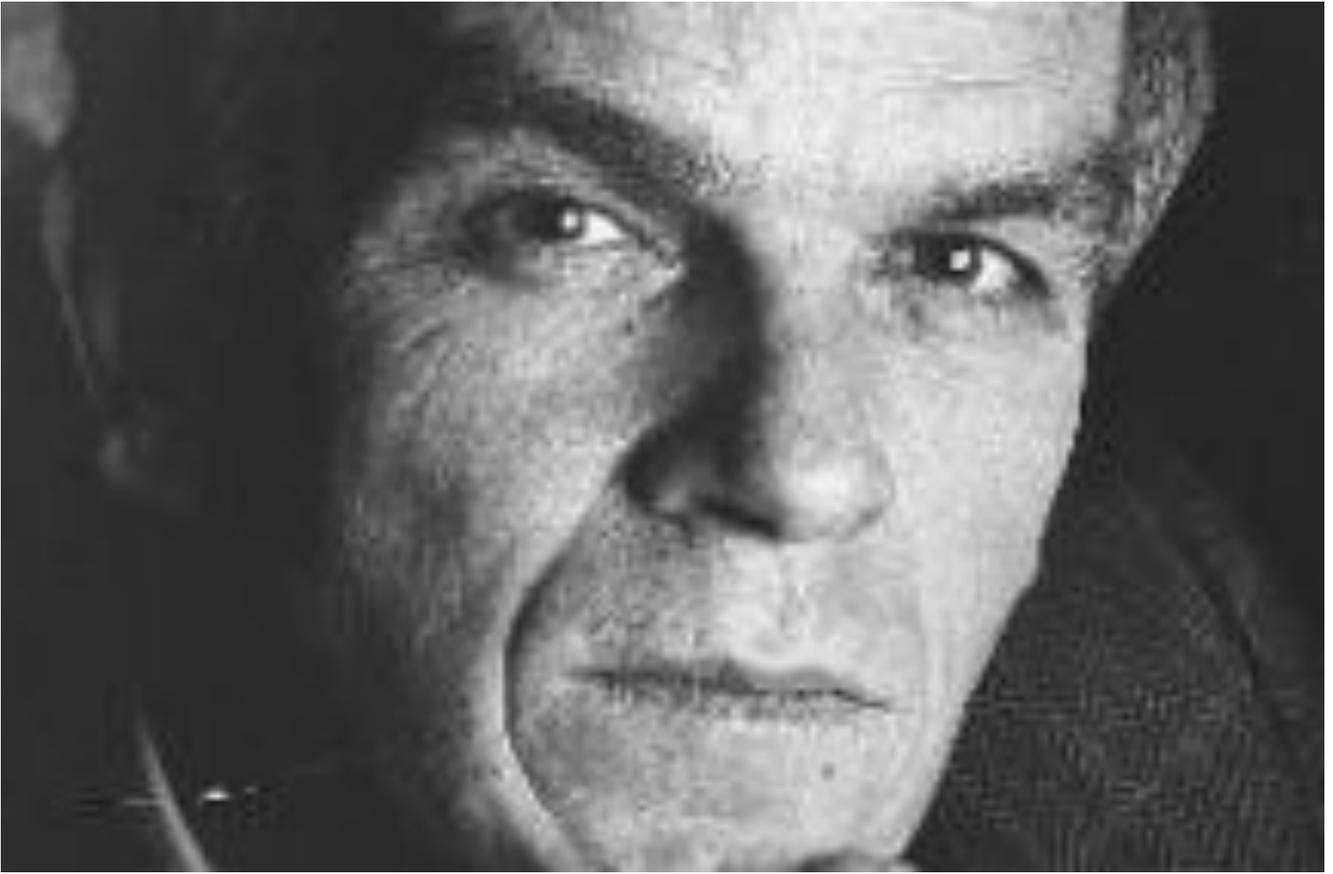
Jimmy Gilbert, BBC producer who presided over a golden age of light entertainment – obituary

08 Jul 2016, 5:53pm



Gale Booth, mother of Cherie Blair and Tony Blair's 'closest political adviser' – obituary

08 Jul 2016, 5:51pm



Lord Evans of Temple Guiting, publisher – obituary

07 Jul 2016, 5:55pm



Robert Nye, poet – obituary

07 Jul 2016, 5:45pm



Sharon Douglas, actress – obituary

07 Jul 2016, 5:39pm



Beatrice de Cardi, archaeologist – obituary

06 Jul 2016, 5:29pm



Captain Sir Miles Wingate – obituary

06 Jul 2016, 5:29pm



'Sir Charles' Thompson, jazz pianist – obituary

05 Jul 2016, 5:25pm



Simon Ramo, rocket scientist – obituary

05 Jul 2016, 5:23pm



Noel Neill, actress – obituary

05 Jul 2016, 1:38pm



Robin Hardy, director – obituary

04 Jul 2016, 5:57pm



Michel Rocard, French prime minister – obituary

04 Jul 2016, 5:26pm



Barbara Goldsmith, writer – obituary

04 Jul 2016, 5:23pm



Bud Spencer, actor – obituary

04 Jul 2016, 5:23pm



Elie Wiesel – obituary

03 Jul 2016, 5:53pm



Michael Cimino – obituary

03 Jul 2016, 5:45pm



Major General Stephen Stopford – obituary

03 Jul 2016, 5:41pm



Caroline Aherne, comedienne – obituary

02 Jul 2016, 4:30pm



Mihaly 'Michu' Meszaros, 'smallest man' – obituary

01 Jul 2016, 3:11pm



Britain's 'greatest poet', Geoffrey Hill, dies at 84

01 Jul 2016, 1:04pm



Sir Geoffrey Hill – obituary

01 Jul 2016, 12:33pm

-
- [Contact us](#)
 - [Subscribers](#)
 - [Archive](#)
 - [Reader Prints](#)
 - [Advertising](#)
 - [Syndication](#)
 - [Guidelines](#)
 - [Privacy](#)

[Terms and Conditions](#)

[Leave your feedback](#)

© Telegraph Media Group Limited 2016