

# CINEMA

## TEACHER OF THE YEAR

SALMA HAYEK GIVES SLT A LESSON IN HER ARABIC HERITAGE, KHALIL GIBRAN AND THE POWER OF MEMORIES.



Salma Hayek can hold her own. Fresh from an intense interview session with eight male reporters from across the GCC, the petite actress walks over to our table at Katara and is clearly fired up after discussing the lack of movies featuring Middle Eastern women. “I said to each one of them, who is an Arab heroine to you? I told them to please write me an essay of who they would like to see as a star of a film and send it to me. Maybe we can...” She trails off, after she realises that she just assigned homework to the people who would soon be writing a review of her latest movie, an animated adaptation of Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet*.

Despite her fierce enthusiasm, Salma is still as polite as can be. After apologising for insisting on drinking her Evian from a glass instead of the bottle – “I have to be a lady” – and gingerly sweetening her tea with pineapple bits and honey, the Mexican-born actress talks a mile a minute about her passion project. After spending the better part of her career playing roles that highlight her Latin side, the star is honouring her Arabic heritage (her paternal grandfather was originally from Lebanon) by producing and voicing the Roger Allers-

directed film version of *The Prophet*. “I first saw the book next to my grandfather’s bed on his side table when I was really little. He always kept it there.” It wasn’t until her late teens, many years after her grandfather’s death, that Salma rediscovered the book. “I read it for the first time and it was a magical experience because it was as if my grandfather was teaching me things about life when I no longer had him.”

Broken down into 26 poetic essays, Salma and her team concentrated on eight universal chapters set to music. Calling the book of prose a “love story with life”, Salma jumped at the chance to introduce the tale to a new generation, including her daughter with French luxury executive François-Henri Pinault, Valentina. “I heard her in the bath singing *Frozen* and after that she was singing [the chapter] On Children, every word of it. I got chills because I realised my daughter was reciting Khalil Gibran at age six.”

It seems Valentina isn’t the only person affected by her mother’s lessons. Just as we’re wrapping up, Salma is delivered several pieces of paper. Not only had the group of journalists accepted her assignment, but they had handed it in early. A+’s all around. ☺

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## GIRL POWER MOMENTS

The outspoken Latina co-founded **Chime for Change**, a charity focused on raising funds and awareness for education, health and justice for girls and women internationally.



She may have been nominated for an Oscar for her role in *Frida* but it took ten years for her to convince Hollywood to get on board with the biopic on Mexican artist **Frida Kahlo**.

Her production company Ventanarosa was the driving force behind **Ugly Betty**, the cheeky television show about a quirky aspiring fashion editor that was adapted from a Colombian telenovela.



She was honoured, alongside Gloria Steinem, as a women’s rights advocate in 2014 by **Equality Now**. “We need to make war against hate,” she said. “I think that if you hate women you hate humanity.”



In 2012, the star joined forces with friend **Jada Pickett Smith** to fight human trafficking. Their Don’t Sell Bodies campaign raised awareness about the exploitation of women around the world. ☺