

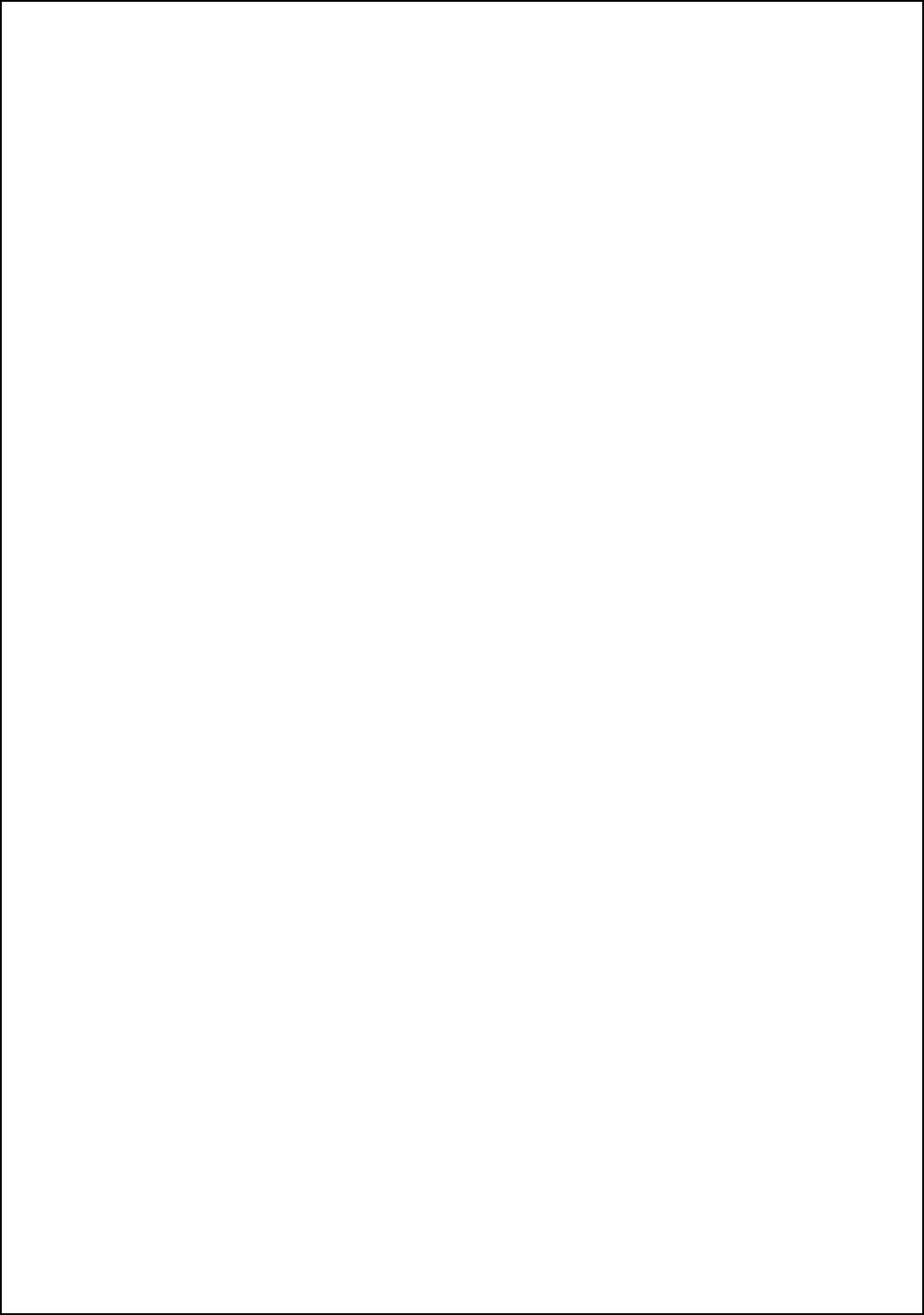


OFFICIAL SELECTION
COMPETITION
FESTIVAL DE CANNES



sieranevada

A film by **Cristi Puiu**



MANDRAGORA, PRODUKCIJA 2006 SARAJEVO, LUCIAN PINTILIE,
SISTERS & BROTHER MITEVSKI, SPIRITUS MOVENS, IADASAREACASA and
ALCATRAZ FILMS

present



OFFICIAL SELECTION
COMPETITION
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

sieranevada

A film by **Cristi Puiu**

With **Mimi Brănescu, Dana Dogaru, Sorin Medeleni, Ana Ciontea**

Romania – Ratio : 1.85 - Sound : 5.1

Length : 173min

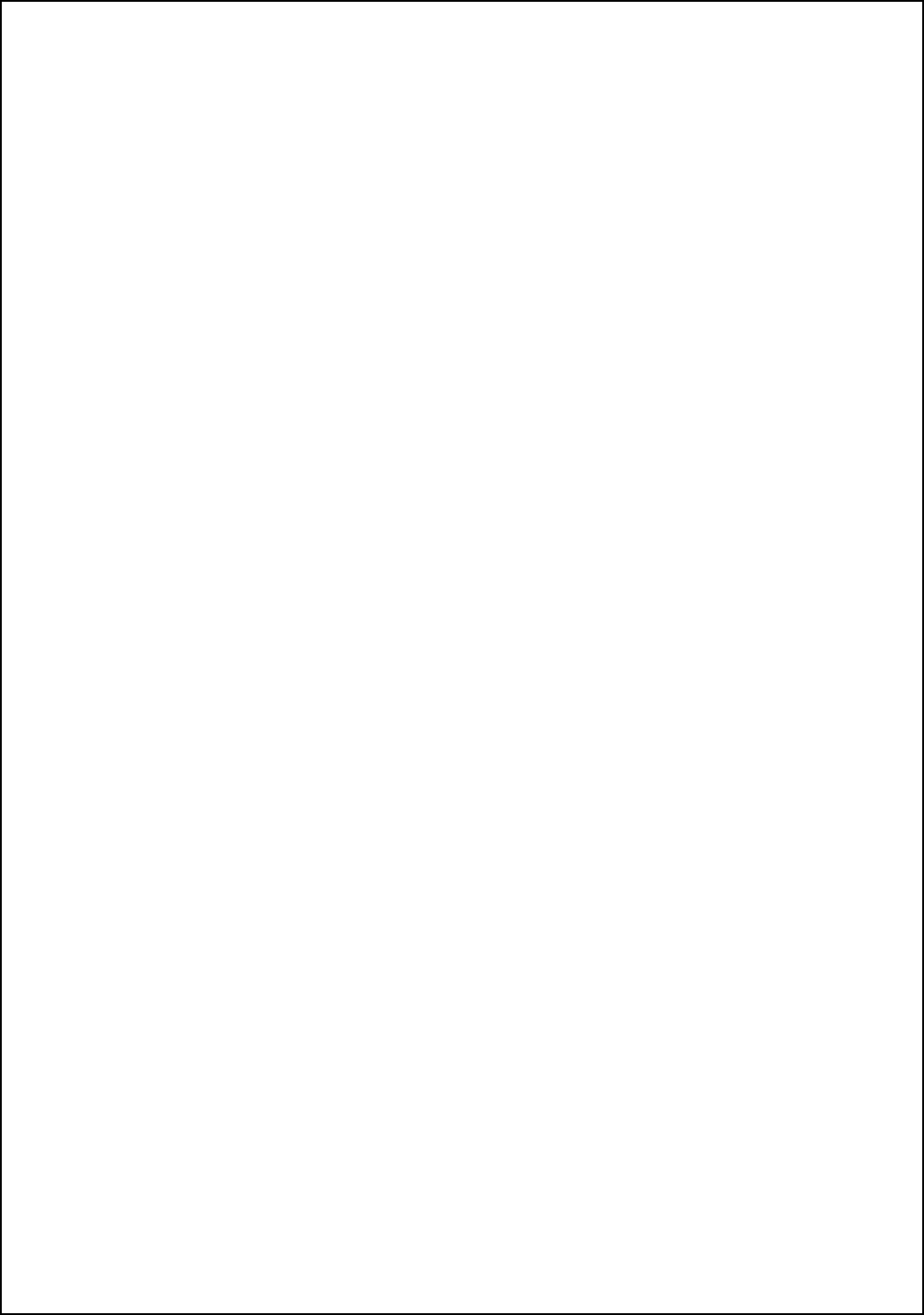
INTERNATIONAL SALES

Elle Driver
66 rue de Miromesnil - 75008 Paris
+33 1 56 43 48 70
sales@elledriver.eu
www.elledriver.fr
In Cannes : 7 La Croisette - 7th floor

PR in Cannes

Martin Marquet
+1 310 927 5789
martin.marquet@mac.com
Kara MacLean
+1 310 254 4934
kara@touchwoodpr.com

Photos can be downloaded on :
www.sieranevada-lefilm.com

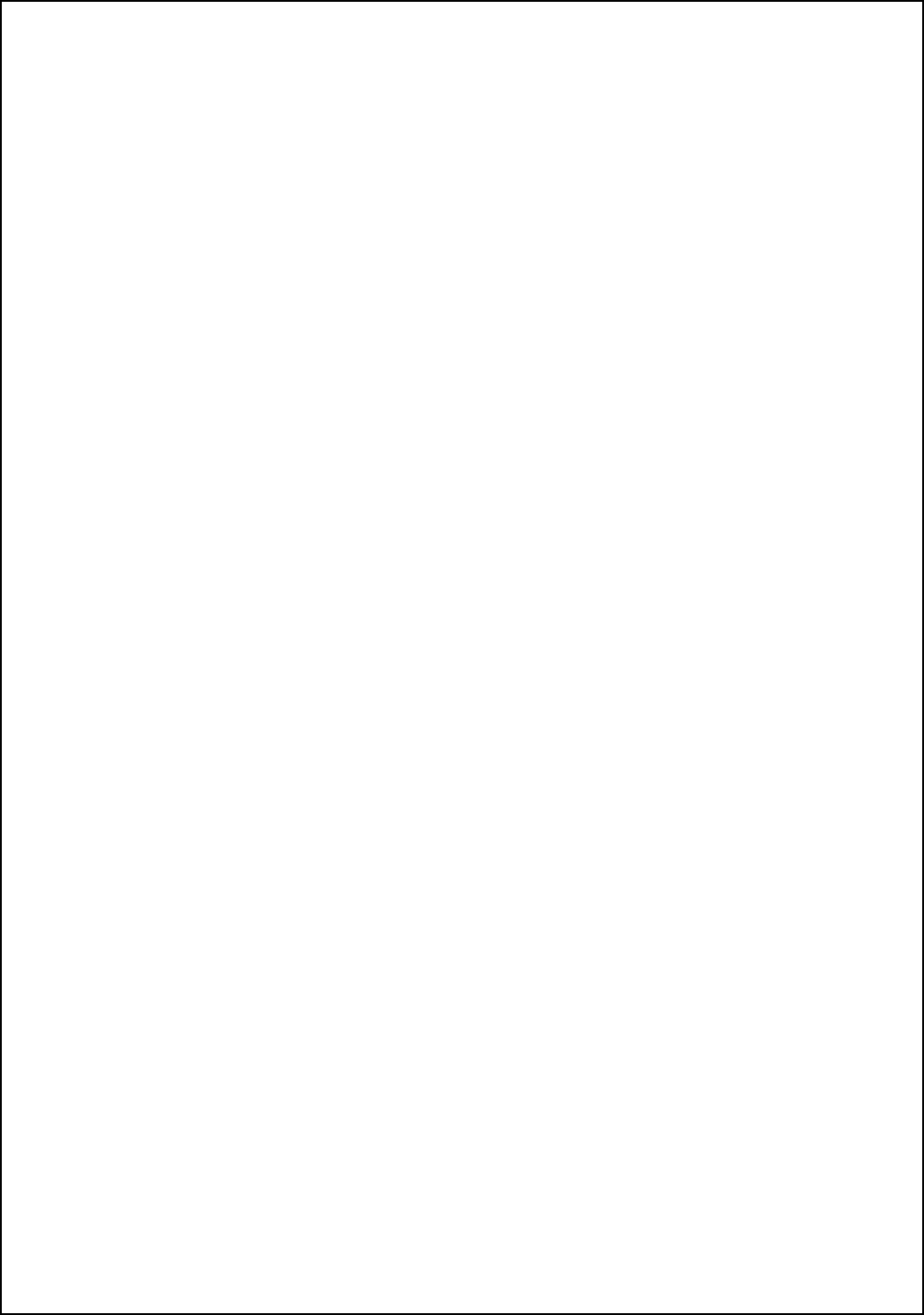


SYNOPSIS

Somewhere in Bucharest, three days after the attack on Charlie Hebdo in Paris and forty days after his father's death, 40-year-old doctor Lary spends one Saturday at a family gathering in memory of the deceased.

The event does not go as planned. Discussions are heated, fierce differences of opinion arise.

Forced to face his fears and his past, and obliged to reconsider his place in the family, Lary is left with no choice but to tell the truth...



INTERVIEW WITH CRISTI PUIU

What gave you the inspiration for the story of *Sieranevada*?

It was in August 2012, during the Sarajevo Festival, I was at home. Mirsad Purivatra, the festival director, called me and asked me if I had a script. No, I didn't have a script, but I was going to write one. It would take place in a closed setting with a fairly large cast of characters.

What brought about the context of a memorial service?

My father died in 2007. I was on the jury of the *Un Certain Regard* section of the Cannes Film Festival. I immediately went home, and at the first memorial service, which took place just after the funeral, things took a very bizarre turn. There were people I didn't know, friends of my father that he'd have a drink with, and neighbors as well. I remember getting into an argument with one of my mother's colleagues over the history of communism.

Like in the film with the character who regrets the communist era?

Yes. Years later I talked about it with my brother. I said to him, *"I'm writing a screenplay about Papa's memorial service. Do you remember that argument about communism?"* My brother, who'd taken part in that heated debate, replied that he didn't remember a thing. Yet the discussion was so animated that the woman ended up walking out. I started to tell my brother my version of the scene, and he persisted: *"Sorry, but I really don't remember all that."* It drove me nuts, it made me furious, because I needed him to fill in the details. It really got me down. Sometimes people remember or record the same things differently.

Memories, or more precisely, the memory of facts are at the heart of your story. A memory that both shapes society and imposes it, like the one in your film?

When we attain self-awareness at about the age of 10, we are already educated and formatted by the history of our country. We see things in a way that is already very mapped out. It leads to inertia. We're prepared to accept a given truth and turn a blind eye to possible errors. That's the price to pay to become a member of a community and to be accepted by it.

Is it very important for your characters to belong to a community?

It's a question of structure. Like bees, like ants, humans live in a community. If you remove one element from this community, everything has to be reconfigured. Everything will be reshuffled. When someone dies, everything changes for little communities that are families. There's a power struggle. There will be a quest to see who finally conquers power. And each person comes with his own discourse, like in an election campaign.

A discourse that might also refer to major historical events, like the character who talks about September 11, 2001.

He's disturbed by everything that is said about this event, and he's right to be in that it's important to talk about everything. But when he builds his reasoning on conspiracy theories found on the Internet, that's where he's wrong. Generally speaking, we never know more than a little fragment of reality when it comes to history. We can't find definitive answers. In fact, the most common fiction in our life is History, History as it's told at school. I'm in a good position to talk about that, because I learned at school a certain History during the communist era. I was 23 years old when the Berlin Wall fell. With it, a whole history disappeared and was immediately replaced with another History, another version of the facts. Things that I didn't know, even though I took a keen interest in History. It really threw me for a loop.

So September 11 is just a pretext to talk about History?

Yes, I could've also taken the Second World War. It just so happens that up until September 11, 2001, I was reading a lot of testimonials about communist prisons. I wanted to revisit communist history. The Communists falsified history with a very clear program. Once again, I don't think anyone can really believe since then that History is stable or that there is any immutable truth. I think that the history of man is constantly moving and that we actually have to make readjustments concerning what we believe about events in the past. Constantly. Because it's nothing but an approximation.

We're in the utmost confusion. Today there may be an escape route, through faith. But I am neither Catholic nor Orthodox. Even if we all have plenty of ideas about those religions, actually we know nothing about spirituality. That is not the road we took.

Your characters don't only discuss, argue and rail against each other. They're also very much interested in food, an important and very convivial element of the film!

Yes, and yet no one really manages to eat finally. Meals are a way of ritualizing things, which speaks to all cultures because it exists in all cultures. People gather around the dinner table. Put simply, the recurrence of the dinner table is a tradition, but it also gives a false sense of solidarity. It's not only a matter of food, of all that the body needs and which in the film becomes urgent because they all end up being really hungry. No, it becomes urgent to show that when they're hungry, all feelings of solidarity and friendship fall by the wayside. That said, I've shown the film to friends and they were delighted because they all wanted to eat after seeing it.

What is the purpose of the rituals that punctuate your film (preparation of meals, the pope's blessing, etc.)?

It makes it possible to focus the debate on topics that have nothing to do with commemorating the deceased, like with my father's memorial service. In Romania, that's how it works: there's the funeral and people gather afterward. Then we get together forty days afterward to remember the person, and then a year later, we get together again. And finally, seven years later. As for my father, we did the seven-year commemoration in 2014.

Why did you situate practically the whole film in a single place: an apartment?

We live in a world of which we know the limits. So the film itself cannot be conceived other than a geographically limited world unto itself. That's why the setting is closed, and it takes place in a space cut off from the world. That space is the mirror reflection of the world in miniature. Day and night: both are present in this apartment. Some rooms are darker, others are lighter, with different decors, like landscapes. You can't escape from this apartment just as you can't escape from the planet. So you have to take it upon yourself to enter all the rooms and make overtures toward others. The most important thing becomes the meeting with another person. There's a meaning in all that. Creating a compartmentalized world without communication where each person is shut off in his bubble without knowing there's anyone else, or venturing out to meet others... The choice between the two alternatives can change everything.

And when someone hesitates to enter a room?

He decides to stop thinking whenever it suits him, artificially. He stops at the comfort threshold. When it becomes uncomfortable, you don't go in, and that's when you start wondering about lots of things that you don't dare submit for debate. The apartment made it possible to express all that.

Was it hard to find?

Strange things happened with the apartment. We found one whose owner had died recently, and the day I visited it, they were commemorating the forty days after his death. The man had lived there with his two cats. He died leaving the cats, and one of them cried. It was a very dusty apartment full of cat hair and cobwebs. The place probably hadn't been touched in a long time. We kept a lot of its original contents for the film, including much of the furniture, the paintings, and even the photo of the owner that you can see now and then. The major advantage of the place was that we could imagine the characters' trajectory in a space whose limits you get used to very quickly, the limits of each room, rooms that each contain a whole world. A whole concert of doors that open and close. Doors are very present in the film. They're not only doors that open to let you through, they're doors that shut you in, too, that are obstacles. All that constructs my story visually.

You also play with the sound made by these doors, and in general the resonance of this apartment.

The first shot of the film is very important because you hear some things and not others, which forces the audience to construct the story with the fragmentary information available. Inside the apartment, the open or closed doors have exactly the same effect: what you hear, and what you don't hear. There are bits and pieces of stories, snippets of talk, with which you compose events. And it always comes back down to that in life: you don't have the whole story, the story of the community or the story of a personal event. It's a puzzle, but most of the pieces are missing, and when I say most of the pieces, I mean that we only have a handful of pieces from the mountain of pieces that make up the history of humanity. We only have a jumble of pieces at our disposal and let's say between the pieces we have to imagine everything. That's what fiction is. The fiction of our life, our personal history, and we're convinced we hold the whole truth.

Why did you choose to film constantly at eye level?

Cinema makes it possible to put the viewer tacitly in the same place as the camera lens. It's very interesting, because each viewer thinks that it's he or she who's seeing the story. It puts you in the position of an observer. It's very funny. So the camera is an invisible man, or in the case of my film, a dead man. I have problems with death, and so here I told myself, *"This is the ideal story!"* In the Orthodox tradition, the soul of a dead person is free for 40 days; it can move about. I wondered how I could tell the story through the eyes of a dead man wandering around. By putting the camera in the place of the dead person, this invisible man. That's what I was after, the gaze of the dead man.

What do you mean by the dead man's gaze?

It's the gaze of a man who has the privilege of saying goodbye silently to those he leaves behind, in other words to observe them. How do we look at things when we know we won't be back? What will we look at? Or not look at? The feelings I wanted to elicit were emotion, curiosity, but also a sort of flight of the camera. I imagine things are like that.

What's the meaning of your title, *Sieranevada*?

It grew out of a question I asked myself, *"Why do film titles change according to nationality?"* It drives me nuts. At first I even said to myself, *"I'll come up with my own titles in each language."* And then I settled on a title that can't be changed. What's interesting in *Sieranevada* is to see that the name is usually in two words: Sierra Nevada. But in Romanian normally it's one word, like it's pronounced. I altered the title by using only one "r," so that people will say, *"that's not how it's written."* How's it written then? And in Japanese? And in Georgian? It's totally stupid. It makes me think of the expression *"the devil is a bookkeeper."*

So your alteration/intervention in the spelling of *Sieranevada* is a game?

The fact that the devil is a bookkeeper, that people keep accounts and come tell me during the shooting *"that's not how it's written,"* pleased me. Deep down the truth is, who cares! But our brain has such a craving for meaning that it will create meaning where there is none, where there's nothing. Actually any title can work, but you can't say that, so you have to deliver a title and that's it! It's a personal question. It's a title that popped into my mind. How did it come about? That's a mystery, and lots of things are mysterious.

The title indeed evokes mystery and adventure. The adventure of the lives of these restless characters.

Yes, it had to talk about a place, a space. It's the only rational thing that kept me going until I finally came up with the title. *Sieranevada* has the resonance of a western, even if there is no famous western that has that title. It evokes snow and another language, Spanish, and the music of that language. *Sieranevada* sounds nice. It also evokes snowcapped mountain chains that resemble the communist apartment buildings, the chains of blocks made of light-colored stone. For the film poster, I photographed those chains of apartment blocks, those little compartments with windows, all the lack of confidence of the community of Romanians.

CRISTI PUIU

Cristi Puiu was born in Bucharest in 1967. While studying cinema at the *École Supérieure d'Arts Visuels* in Geneva in the 1990s, he made several short films and documentaries. On his return to Romania, he continued to paint.

In 2001, he made his first feature film, *Stuff and Dough*, a road movie shot with a hand-held camera in a near documentary style. In competition in the *Quinzaine des Réalisateurs* section of the Cannes Film Festival, the film won several awards in various festivals, in particular in Thessaloniki. Winner of the Golden Bear for the best short film at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2004 for *Cigarettes and Coffee*, Cristi Puiu then shot *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu*, which took the Prix *Un Certain Regard* in Cannes in 2005 as well as several other awards. His film *Aurora* in 2010 is the second part of a six-part series entitled *Six Stories from the Outskirts of Bucharest*.

Sieranevada is his forth feature.

MIMI BRĂNESCU

Mimi Brănescu was born in 1974 in Calarasi, Romania. He is an actor, stage director and screenwriter. He made his screen debut in Cristi Puiu's second feature film, *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu*. He then worked with the director Radu Muntean on his films *Boogie (Quinzaine des Réalisateurs 2008)* and *Tuesday after Christmas (Un Certain Regard 2010)*. He recently starred in Doru Nitescu's feature *Carmen*. He teamed up with Cristi Puiu again in 2016 for *Sieranevada*, in which he plays Lary.

DANA DOGARU

Dana Dogaru was born on August 1, 1953 in Bucharest. She is a writer, actress and director. Her acting career began on the stage in 1977 and then on screen in the film *Me, You and Ovidiu*. Dana Dogaru is a prominent figure in Romanian theater and film today. She has played in *Hangita*, *Motel between the Hills*, *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu*, *The Paper Will Be Blue*, *Happiness Is So Near*, *Expedition*, *Francesca*, *Silent Wedding*. She rejoined Cristi Puiu in 2016 for *Sieranevada*, in which she plays Doamna Mirica.

CAST LIST

Mimi BRĂNESCU	LARY
Judith STATE	SANDRA
Bogdan DUMITRACHE	RELU
Dana DOGARU	Mrs. MIRICA
Sorin MEDELENI	TONY
Ana CIONTEA	Aunt OFELIA
Rolando MATSANGOS	GABI
Cătălina MOGA	LAURA
Marin GRIGORE	SEBI
Tatiana IEKEL	Aunt EVELINA
Marian RÂLEA	Mr. POPESCU
Ioana CRĂCIUNESCU	Mrs. POPESCU
Ilona BREZOIANU	CAMI
Simona GHIĂ	SIMONA
Valer DELLAKEZA	The Pope
Andi VASLUIANU	MIHAITA
Mara Elena ANDREI	IRINA
Petra KURTELA	The Croatian

CREW LIST

Written and Directed by	Cristi PUIU
Director of Photography	Barbu BĂLĂSOIU
Set Design	Cristina BARBU
Editor	Letiția ȘTEFĂNESCU Ciprian CIMPOI - Iulia MURESAN
Sound	Jean Paul BERNARD - Filip MURESAN Christophe VINGTRINIER
Costume Design	Maria PITEA Doina RĂDUCUT
Hair and Make-up	Mojca GOROGRANC PETRUSHEVSKA
Assistant Director	Marius OLTEANU

PRODUCTION – FINANCING

Producer MANDRAGORA - Anca PUIU

Coproducers PRODUKCIJA 2006 SARAJEVO -
Mirsad PURIVATRA - Sabina BRANKOVIC
STUDIOUL DE CREATIE CINEMATOGRAFICA -
Lucian PINTILIE
SISTERS & BROTHER MITEVSKI -
Labina MITEVSKA
SPIRITUS MOVENS - Zdenka GOLD
ALCATRAZ FILMS - Laurence CLERC -
Olivier THERY LAPINEY
IADASARECASA
ARTE FRANCE CINEMA

With the support of CENTRUL NAȚIONAL AL CINEMATOGRAFIEI
FONDACIJA ZA KINEMATOGRAFIJU
SARAJEVO
MACEDONIAN FILM AGENCY
CROATIAN AUDIOVISUAL CENTER
REGION ILE DE FRANCE
EURIMAGES – CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

With the participation of HBO ROMÂNIA
AIDE AUX CINEMAS DU MONDE
CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINEMA ET DE
L'IMAGE ANIMEE
INSTITUT FRANÇAIS
MINISTERE DES AFFAIRES ETRANGERES ET
DU DEVELOPPEMENT INTERNATIONAL
ARTE FRANCE

elle.
DRIVER