

OTAC
FATHER

Berlinale
 70th Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Panorama

A film by Srđan Golubović





LOGLINE

When a father is faced with the corrupt social services taking away his children, just because the family is poor, he sets out on foot across Serbia to appeal to the ministry in Belgrade. Against all odds he embarks on a heroic journey to fight for justice, human dignity and his right to raise his children.

SYNOPSIS

A small town in Serbia. Nikola, day laborer and father of two, is ordered to give up his children to social services after poverty and hunger drive his wife to commit a desperate act. Until he can provide adequate conditions for their upbringing, the children will be placed in foster care. Despite Nikola's best efforts and several appeals, the head of the social services centre refuses to return his children and his situation seems hopeless. But when Nikola discovers the local administration may be corrupt, he decides to travel across Serbia on foot and take his case directly to the national ministry in Belgrade. Against all odds and driven by love and despair, this father refuses to give up on justice and his right to raise his children.



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Srdan Golubović

His first feature film ABSOLUTE HUNDRED (APSOLUTNIH STO) was screened in Toronto, San Sebastian, Rotterdam, Pusan and won numerous international and regional film awards.

In 2007. Srdan's second feature film THE TRAP (KLOPKA), had its World premiere at 2007. Berlinale (Forum). The film participated at more than 50 international film festivals (Toronto, Karlovy Vary) and won 21 international awards, it was also successfully distributed in cinemas worldwide.

In 2008 THE TRAP was shortlisted for Oscar for the Best Foreign Film. CIRCLES (KRUGOVI), his third

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

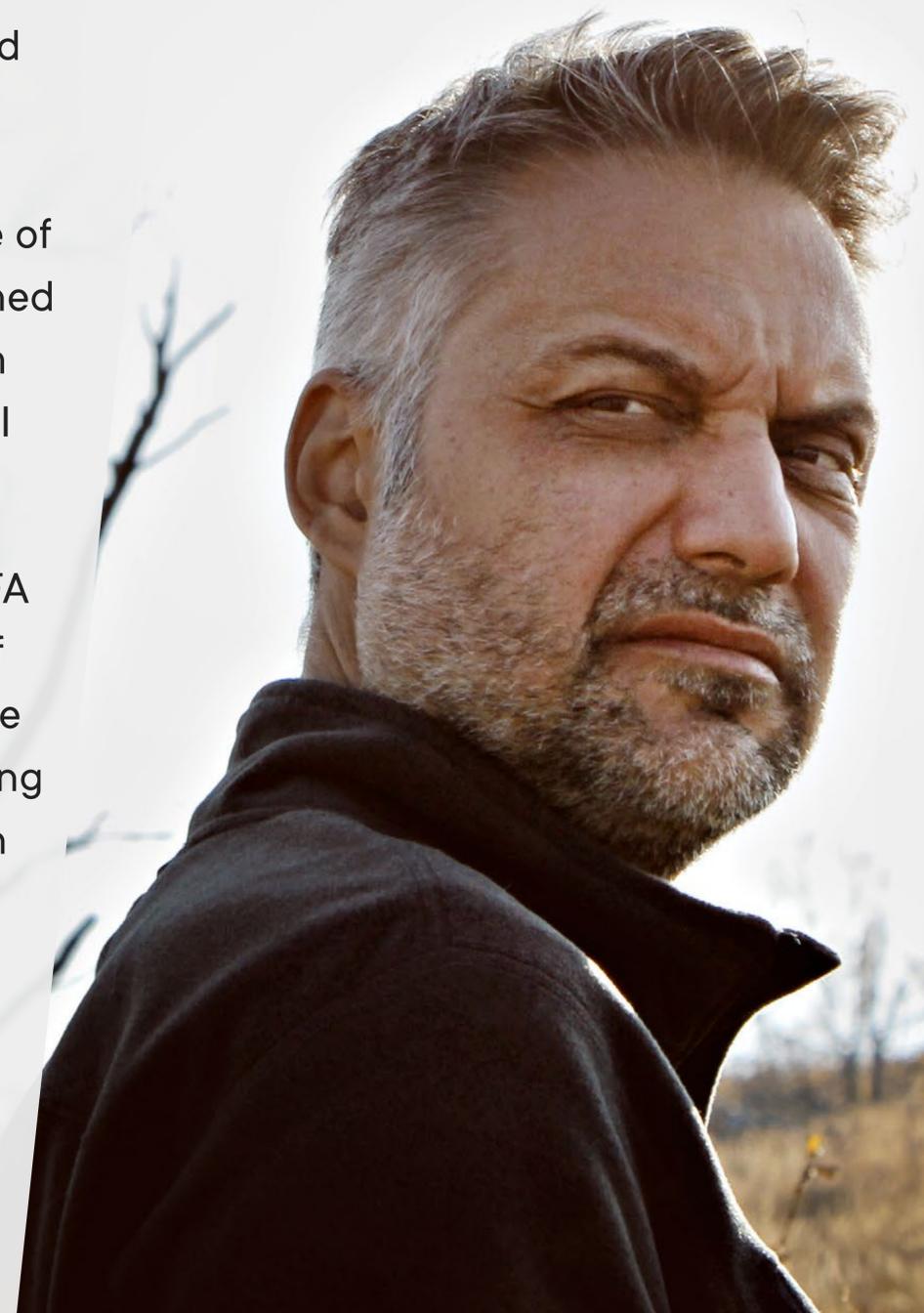
2001:
ABSOLUTE HUNDRED
(Apsolutnih sto)

2007:
THE TRAP
(Klopka)

2013:
CIRCLES
(Krugovi)

feature film had its World premiere at 2013. Sundance Film Festival (World Dramatic Competition) and won Special Jury Prize, film had its European premiere at Berlinale (Forum) where it received Prize of Ecumenical Jury. Film was screened at more than 80 international film festivals and won 45 international film awards.

Srdan Golubovic is member of EFA and the President of the Board of Auteur Film Festival, Belgrade. He works as professor of Film Directing on the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade.





INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

What was the inspiration behind FATHER, and what attracted you to telling this story?

FATHER is inspired by an actual event and an actual man. When I first read his story the father who inspired the film was already in front of the Ministry of Labour, protesting and demanding his children be returned to him. I went there and talked to him. For days I went to see him and offer my support. I realised that there was something very special to his story, something inspirational and cinematic, a Balkans-style PARIS, TEXAS of sorts. Also, I was intrigued by the walking, as an act of protest and freedom. I realised that walking was in fact the greatest and purest form of freedom. As well as of revolt and resistance. Peaceful resistance. Then I thought about the hero and decided to make a film about a man driven by an instinct within, rather than by rational thinking, towards a profoundly personal

and righteous path. He doesn't know exactly what he's doing, but his intuition is guiding him in an unknown direction, and he, only listening to himself and his inner being, follows his path of humanity and purity.

The film starts as a social drama, but then takes a quite unexpected turn, when Nikola embarks on his journey...

I wanted the film to start as a realistic drama about a bureaucratic and corrupt society, and then slowly turn into a film about a man who, through the mythic journey he embarks on as a loser and a castaway, turns into a hero. Starting as a social drama, the film becomes a fairy tale. A film about a man who tests himself, and reclaims his own dignity through his

journey. He is not a hero fighting against the system, he's only fighting to return his children and assemble his family again. We live in an isolated world, in a sheltered zone, in which we have the luxury of thinking and talking about freedom and dignity, about ethical matters. However, the individual I talk about is condemned to one single thing – surviving. He can't afford the luxury of thinking about abstract matters, he's like an animal who has to fight for himself and his family, to survive. This is what our hero Nikola is like. Through the conflict and contrast between the bureaucratic dramatic content and the fairy tale-like world of his trip across the country, I tried to make a film about a journey, a physical and emotional journey of an ordinary man.

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

How do you think Nikola's character evolves throughout the film?

On his journey, Nikola meets different people, some of them testing him and offering him a wrong path, others helping him and giving hope. He follows his own path and his own instinct, listening to nature and finding his allies and travel companions among ordinary people, people just like him, losers and castaways, but also among animals. Birds show him the way, a dog walks with him, wolves make way for him and let him pass, mirroring his transformation from loser to hero.

A particularly important aspect of this film is Nikola's relation to the landscapes he passes through, the sight of devastated factories, one of which was the reason for his journey too. In contrast with this there's nature, not yet devastated, beautiful,

powerful, becoming, during the course of the journey, into a part of his inner world, his support and his guardian.

Did you draw any inspiration from other filmmakers or artists, especially for this film?

My great inspiration was Yugoslav Black Wave, films by Dušan Makavejev, Aleksandar Petrović, Živojin Pavlović and Želimir Žilnik. Their films are uncompromising and brave. They continually explored and analysed society, dealing with that reality in a fierce, in-your-face manner. They were on a quest for freedom of cinematic language and, more than anything, on a quest for truth, poetic and existential. They managed to capture reality and turn it into a strong, special and genuine poetic and philosophical world. Whereas today, our reality is much

more irrational and insane than the films we make. In this film, I only tried to follow life. And reality. I feel that directors of Yugoslav Black Wave made films that were more interesting than reality. Reality has nowadays become decadent and improbable to such an extent that we, and here I mean directors, can't really catch up with it. And there's no fiction that can reach the scope of irrationality of what we're living.

Another great source of inspiration while writing the script for this film was Werner Herzog's diary, OF WALKING ON ICE. His record of his three-week-long journey, from Munich to Paris on foot in January 1974. Herzog travelled through snow and blizzard, hoping his sacrifice would prolong the life of his ailing close friend, film critic Lotte Eisner. Herzog's intention proved successful and she lived for another nine years. In the film FATHER there is a scene with a rabbit, which is a direct nod and homage to Herzog's diary.



INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

How was it to work with actor Goran Bogdan, well known for his role as Yuri Gurka in the Fargo TV-series?

Our process was beautiful and the best part of creating this film. Thorough, lengthy and inspirational. We did rehearsals for two months, before the shoot, four or five hours a day, going through every scene, creating and building the hero's emotional map, analysing his every action and gesture. FATHER is a film of silence, and the most important thing was for the hero to be true. Goran and I agreed to build the character as though he were an untrained actor, and then make a shift from the truthfulness and documentarity of the character, a shift that should be invisible and huge.

How was it for you to shoot this film in the Serbian countryside?

I made no attempts to portray reality as worse than it actually is. Unfortunately, the reality is what it is, as are the sights and locations of this beautiful and yet devastated country. I was born and raised in Belgrade, so I was not familiar with the locations the film was made in. I found it exciting to discover my own country. Travelling through Serbia, location scouting, I've come to realise the systemic effort that has been made here to destroy everything that could be destroyed. And what ended up being utterly devastated is man, dignity and any kind of individual integrity.

Do you think this story could have taken place in any country?

Poverty more often than not brings out the worst in everyone. There's nothing nice about poverty. It's the same everywhere, it's universal. And yet, among the people we encounter in the film, there are the good and the bad. That's universal too.

FATHER is an image of contemporary Serbian society, but I think Nikola's fate could befall an ordinary man anywhere. In America, France, Korea, Russia... Nikola is a symbol of the loser of our new times, of neo-liberal slave ownership, a time in which man loses hope and the right to a normal life once he loses his job. The cruelty of these new times is veiled, shrouded in bureaucratic, hypocritical form which, in the heap of rules, mechanisms and policies seemingly protecting someone's rights, fails to recognise the crucial matter, fails to recognise man.

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

Besides directing you also produce. Why is this important to you?

I created the production company Baš Čelik with my friends and associates because I wanted to have freedom, to be able to work as I want to and in a way I think is best for the films I make. This is one of the best things I've ever done, as this freedom I have in making films is what matters to me the most. As well as the possibility to prepare my films thoroughly and for a very long time. It also helps

that the situation in Serbian cinema is good, thanks to the fact that an active and stable Film Centre of Serbia has been established. More results of that are yet to be seen, I am certain of it. For the first time there is the possibility for Serbian filmmakers to have continuity in their work.





MAIN CAST

Goran Bodgan

Born on October 2, 1980 in Široki Brijeg, Bosnia and Hercegovina. Graduated from the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb. He is an actor and writer, and has appeared in more than 40 awarded films and international TV series (Fargo, The Last Panthers).

He is also renowned theater star, that has major roles in plays like Hamlet, Tartufe, This Could be My Street. His latest film "Otac" (Father), directed by Srđan Golubovic, where he plays the main role of Nikola, a father who is faced with the corrupt social services taking away his children, will be premiered in 2020. Berlinale, section Panorama.



MAIN CAST

Goran Bogdan: Nikola
Boris Isaković: Vasiljević
Nada Šargin: Biljana
Milica Janevski: Službenica
Muharem Hamzić: Miloš
Ajla Šantić: Sanja
Vahid Džanković: Službenik
Milan Marić: Jovanović
Jovo Maksić: Goran
Nikola Rakočević: Radoje

MAIN CREW

Director: Srdan Golubović,
Scriptwriters: Srdan Golubović, Ognjen Sviličić
DOP: Aleksandar Ilić,
Costume Designer: Ljiljanja Petrović
Production Designer: Goran Joksimović
Sound Mixer: Bruno Tarrière
Sound Designers: Erik Mischijew, Corina Fleig
Sound Recordist and Sound Mix: Bruno Tarrière
Editor: Petar Marković
Sound Editor: Nikola Medić
Producers: Jelena Mitrović, Boris T. Matić, Lana Matić,
Alexander Ris, Cedomir Kolar, Marc Baschet, Danis Tanović,
Danijel Hočevar, Amra Bakšić Čamo, Adis Djapo
Co-producers: Meinolf Zührorst, Olivier Pere, Remi Burah

Uz učešće / with the participation of Filmski Centar Srbije / Film Center Serbia,
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Ministère Français de la Culture et de la Communication - Institut Français – Aides aux Cinémas du Monde, Hrvatski audiovizualni centar / Croatian Audiovisual Centre,
Slovenski filmski center / Slovenian Film Centre, Fondacija za kinematografiju Sarajevo, Creative Europe Programme – MEDIA of the European Union, FS Viba Film, Slovenia





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