



PARAGRAFF

TV Reporters have the floor

ADELIN PETRIȘOR

producer for "North Korea, nothing to envy" documentary

„Astra Film Festival, an awesome experience“

After showing his film "North Korea, nothing to envy" at the AFF, TV reporter Adelin Petrișor accepted to have a chat with us, this time on the opposite end of the microphone.

How did your Q&A go?

Great! We were almost kicked out of the screen because the next film was supposed to start. I was really surprised, the reportage lasted 20 minutes and the Q+A almost an hour. I was at ASTRA once before in 2008, with a reportage from Afghanistan, that time for Realitatea TV. It was in the Studio Screen, which is now called Saucan.

What do you think about the 2008 experience filtered through today's? What changed?

It was good. I hadn't expected so many people. The screen was completely full and the Q+A was pretty long as well. It's hard to be a TV person, people here are directors, I have nothing to do with that, I don't make auteur films. In TV reporting we don't afford giving opinions, we try to be objective, I mean, clearly, nobody can be 100% objective. I was a bit nervous, always am, I am parachuted from a different world. When we were reporting from Baghdad for Antena 1, we had 1-2 million viewers, but it could've just as well been 10 million, you can't see them. What you see is a camera operator, who is your friend, and everything is much simpler.

When 150 people sit opposite you and ask you questions you get terribly nervous, especially when you realize that some of them are directors whose films are in festivals, who have experience. I was nervous.

But it was a sensational experience, because this time I had time to see films, I saw a lot of student films.



What was it that attracted people to your film? The subject or your notoriety?

The subject, I think. North Korea...

I just happened to have a visa for that country, that's any journalists dream; it's the country where every reporter want to film. It's a country, which is

almost completely sealed off, where people know less than children here do in Romania. They don't have access to information, they eat every other day. We know that many people died of famine in the 90s, but we don't know how many. ONU estimates range from a few hundred people to up to 2.5 million. It's a very interesting country and people want to know more about it. Especially since here we see things through a different keyhole, until '89 Romania was a dictatorship, I think we notice far more nuances than westerners who never knew what it means to not have electricity, to have hot water every other day, to not have chocolate or bread.

If we were to compare North Korea to one of the countries in the Middle Eastern conflict areas where you were active, are there common points from the reporter's perspective?

There is no comparison. There is no imminent danger. It wasn't a dangerous place to film in, but for me it was the most frightening experience I've had because I felt like I travelled in time to a Romania without 1989. That's how I think Romania could have looked like if not for the Revolution, maybe not as insane, but somewhere in that ballpark. We had all "chances" of ending up there.

About the festival?

Awesome! I am very happy to be here for the 20th anniversary, and I'll say this one more time, I am a war correspondent lost among directors and artists, but I feel great. And I am happy I wasn't alone at the screening, that the room was full.

by Cătălin Olaru

CĂTĂLINA BUCUR

„Like in movies“, Digi24 TV

I've had my first experience with AFF last year. I came here to cover the Sibiu documentary festival because the TV programme "Ca-n filme" ("Just like in the movies") from Digi24 was (as it is this year) a media partner of the event. After just a few days I decided that I must return in the following years. I had discovered a special festival, different from the ones I knew, and definitely compared to those in Bucharest. The atmosphere is relaxed and personal, the spirit of the place is very intimate. You feel like all the filmmaker and filmlovers are ready to share anything with you - movies, opinions, passionate dialogues about cinema and, why not, a glass of wine. At ASTRA you learn a lot and you leave having fallen in love with documentaries.



interview

GABY BABIĆ

director of GoEast Film Festival, member of Astra Film Festival jury

"Romanian cinema has a unique and creative way of telling a story"



Gaby Babic was born in 1976 in Frankfurt, Germany. She studied in Frankfurt and Paris and holds an M.A. in Theater, Film and Media Studies, Political Science and German Literature. From 2005 to 2007 she worked at the Goethe Institute Sarajevo as a Programme Coordinator, 2007/2008 at the University Konstanz in the research project "Visual Cultures in Serbia". Since 2008, she is curator and cultural manager for several film festival and cultural institutions. She is member of the collective "reel to real", presenting experimental and documentary film in Frankfurt. Since September 2010 she is the director of GoEast - Festival of Central and Eastern European Film, Wiesbaden.

It's your first year in Astra Film Festival's jury. What made you want to be a part of this jury?

I accepted an invitation I received, and I always feel honoured to receive such invitation. I like going to juries, to meet other colleagues and to discuss films, and it's always a possibility for me to watch new films, which I anyway have to do for the selection of my film festival. I'm a fan of Romanian cinema in general so this is a very pleasant activity for me.

What are your main criteria when judging a film?

I don't have a catalogue of criteria which I go through saying "ok, this is good or this is bad". Of course we discuss image quality or general technical quality, but then is a question of general assessment of the film: Is there a good relations in the main protagonists? Are there certain ethical standards?

In your opinion, what makes a good movie?

For me, a good movie is a movie I feel attached to for some reason, either emotional or via image so it must have a union of the two: emotional attachment and visual attachment.

We all know you are the director of GoEast Film Festival; which are the similarities between GoEast and Astra Film Festival?

GoEast is a festival dedicated to Central European films, so we screen films from all post communists countries and we also have a documentaries competition and in all other sections of the festival, including the retrospective section, we screen documentaries so this is a connection between the two festivals. In general, I am also a selectioner for our festival and I travel a lot in Eastern European countries so every year I visit countries like Poland, Czech Republic or Russia to gather and select films so it's very logical to attend here if I'm invited.

What is your opinion about the Romanian filmmakers, especially the ones present at Astra Film Festival this year?

I haven't had the chance to watch Romanian program so far but in general, Romanian cinema, from my festival was quite crucial in the competition and last year we screened 16 films in our competition, 10 fiction feature and 6 documentaries, and we always had Romanian films in our competition, which already tells us how strong Romanian cinema is in Europe in general. In my opinion, it is really quite unique and creative and in terms of telling a story is has a very special own way of telling stories, which is very different from Polish or Czech cinema.

Do you have a favourite Romanian director?

I follow up all the big names, Cristi Puiu is one of my festivals favourite directors, his film "Aurora" was screened in our competition, and also Marian Crişan is one of my favourites, he won "Best Director" award. We also had the documentary film maker Alexandru Solomon with us every year, and the producer Ada Solomon was also a member of the GoEast Festival's jury, so there are many friendships and connections with Romanian directors and producers.

Do you have a favourite section from Astra Film Festival?

Until now I was watching all the films from Central and Eastern European section and the Student section but I also knew before some films from the international competitions in general, I think the handwriting of the selection is very special, very good, it tends to favour also more experimental documentaries and not so traditional and conventional storytelling, which I really like. But I haven't seen so far a film from the ecological section, I will do that today.

by Corina David

Astra Film Festival photo retrospective

In 2011, Astra Film Festival was supported by MEDIA Desk Romania, and was organized a master class dedicated to European Union's MEDIA Program and to financing opportunities offered by it to Romanian film makers. The master class series this year concentrated on screening and debating all genders of documentary film: observational documentary, independent documentary, ethnographic documentary and TV documentary, as well as that type of films that occur when documentary meets Internet and new media. 2011 was the first year of Eco CinematogrAFF section, a complex program that consisted in films, music and a Traditional Food Fair. Almost 100 movies representing 24 countries participated in Astra Film Festival last year, and almost a third of them were produced in Romania, by Romanian or foreign directors. The film "The Truth about Holocaust" worth mentioning, it is signed by Florin Cioaba and tells the story of Romanian romas' holocaust, presenting some very few known facts about this subject. Astra Film Festival 2012 also included this year a series of thematically films and debates, focused on historical documentary, and the presence of Dacians in those kinds of films.



The AFF 2009 barrel



AFF 2009 Corneliu Porumboiu



interview

PILLE RUNNEL

Director and Chairman of the selection committee
of the World Film Festival in Tartu, Estonia



A Journey through museums and film festivals with anthropology as its main connecting thread

How did the World Film Festival in Tartu get started and what is the philosophy behind it?

This year, in fact, we celebrated our 10th year anniversary and it was, actually, a joint effort with the Nordic Anthropological Film Association (NAFA), a quite informal organization. But they had these semi-informal film events or festivals for years before and we got acquainted with them through our work. They encouraged us to organize this joint event. So after we had made this festival, we realized that there was this expectation, outside of our small town, to turn it into this world event. So we continued it until now. And maybe why we have succeeded is because it's a collaborative effort between an NGO and the Estonian National Museum, where part of our staff is also employed. So the Museum was also open to having a film festival which isn't necessarily something museums usually do. So the philosophy is also rooted in our background. It's a non-competition festival and many of our guests compare it to a film school event or this friendly exchange, rather than an industry event.

How do you combine your work as research director of the Estonian National Museum with the work involved at the festival?

Sometimes it's quite a challenge because being a research director is a full time job and even more. But at the same time, I was just at a museum innovation conference and the speaker said that museums are potentially some of the most open and creative places in the world and this relates to some kind dynamic, the flexibility to create our jobs and our tasks. Of course, it quite an work load most of the time. It might actually get a lot more difficult next year as the museum is preparing the opening of a new building in the next 3 years.

So we also have to work on the content and you have to think and plan the curating the content. So it is a challenge.

Aside from being the festival's director, you are also its programmer. Can you talk a little about the selection process and your criteria for choosing films every year?

Being a programmer does not mean I make my own decisions. Actually we have a program team, a selection committee. Our festival is in March and at one point in the summer we start looking around and checking festivals, whatever is out there. Then we send a call for films, that closes in October of every year so that the whole team will, after that, start watching the films. Still, the numbers now are like a bit manageable since we're a non-competition festival. So we will have perhaps around 400 films to watch this year. While we are watching the films, we have joint, longer meetings at the beginning of December where we discuss the main program and we will make a selection but also discuss the side programs. And then it could be that we appoint someone to prepare the side programs but our team, first of all, agrees on the topics. So we don't exactly vote on the films but we give our preferences and we discuss them, which is a quite time consuming process. It is an informal type of selection but I think it works for us. I suppose some would say we're quite slow and inefficient, particularly compared to competition festivals, but we are much happier this way as it gives us the opportunity to talk about why we like or not like certain films and other criteria, such as whether the film fits into the composition of that year's festival, which is always a key factor. It might happen that we like a film but we can't put it in because it does not stylistically fit or the theme is not related to other films in the festival.

What do you believe is the responsibility of a documentary film festival, particularly one with an interest towards the anthropological field?

We have had discussions a few times about whether we should have a, let's say, focus on human rights, like other festivals but we have not moved towards that. And we also don't have this mainstream goal of raising culture awareness. There is almost this exploratory theme to the films in our festival. So one layer is actually almost like science communication. Of course we have a type of professional audience: university students, researchers but we also have a general audience. So I think our films are kind of creative and anthropological documentaries and the most important thing we can offer is a dialogue, in which people are free to think on their own and make their own minds up. They are not told what to think.

How did the decision to come to the Astra Film Festival come about?

Astra Film Festival is also part of this network of anthropological festival. Of course, now it has widened its field of interest but it still has those roots. This is why me and my colleagues have been here in earlier years and why we are here this year, as well. Nowadays, it's also an important place to see Romanian and Central & Eastern European documentaries, which is something that is lacking from big Western festivals. So I think Astra is one of the two places in Europe where you can go and see these types of films. Also, it's always good to come back to a friendly place you know well and I would say that, particularly, this year the selection of Central & Eastern European selection is a very important feature on the schedule. Ultimately, Astra is as nice as festival as ever. It's

nice to be back here after a few years and find the same type of atmosphere and familiar spirit. It's great that it has carried on for 20 years, in the same powerful and positive way.

Have there been any film thus far that you have liked or any that you look forward to seeing while you will be here?

Well, yesterday was the first day we went to see films because we arrived just the night before so we didn't have the time before. But I tried to watch as many Central & Eastern European films as I could throughout the day. Today and tomorrow we will also have to balance the film schedule with our event and meetings, so I don't have much time. But I mainly want to pick the films I wouldn't see anywhere else. I'll probably not go to the big screenings, like "The Act of Killing", which obviously is a must-see, but I can see that in many places. I'm actually looking forward to seeing films that perhaps are not such big productions but only Astra can allow me access to them. Of course, the films in the Romania and Central & Eastern European categories are not made in the same way and vary in topic but still, they have similar problems because the societies are faced with the same kind of problems. And even if I could see the films in other places, I still think it's important to watch them in a Central-Eastern context as the experience and discussions will be different.

Why did you feel it was important to take part in the International Film Festival Meeting?

I was actually not going to come to the festival as my colleagues were already attending but when I learned that Astra Film Festival was doing this meeting of international film festivals, I decided to come as well. It's always a nice thing to attend because festival makers always have this desire to exchange information and tell their stories and you have to go to these types of events just to find out about new films but also share in each other's victories. I think that the most important part of it, is the networking aspect. I'm looking forward to see teams of festivals we would not normally see because we rarely meet, aside from exchanging emails or the odd meeting one in a while. Also, as a general rule, I think it's very important to meet people in your own field and exchange opinions and advice, establish a relationship that you couldn't have outside of these official meetings.

by Loredana Ghidancea



Children at the 2009 AFF



Astra Film Junior 2009



2011 Children entering the films from Astra Film Junior



2011 Master class Cristi Puiu



interview

GRIT LEMKE

DOK Leipzig programmer,
member of the Astra Film Festival jury

Art versus reality, or the two faces of documentary

Q: What is your relation with Astra Film Festival? What do you think about the films in the competition?

GRIT LEMKE: It's my first time at this festival but of course I've heard about it, the biggest documentary festival in Romania. There are many Romanian films and filmmakers and of course I've heard about it so I was very happy to get the invitation. As for the competitions, I was really - not surprised, but I liked it a lot, it was a really good selection. Many of the films I've met at other festivals, some of them were also screened in Leipzig, and many of the films I would have selected. Not all of them, but it's normal, because every festival has its own programming. And it was really not easy to make a decision.

Q: As you are a programmer yourself, can you tell us how do you analyse the projects in a competition? Based on what criteria: the subject tackled or the way the film was made (esthetics, difficulties of the filmmaker)?

GL: For me and also for many of my colleagues, it's not the subject, I mean we're definitely not interested in the subject. Of course I'm politically interested and also socially, but I think if it was about the subject we could read a newspaper or watch TV news, but this is about artistic documentary so it's about art, mainly. So we're interested

in the way the films were made, this is also what we discussed and also what I, as a programmer, am looking for. It's about an author, the handwriting of an author, a certain artistic style that's important. The question will always be how many levels the documentary has. If the documentary has only one level, say it's about children in Africa, then it would be not enough. But if it's art, it should tell me something about me, it should approach some existential questions. It must always be a level above.

Q: How do you select documentaries for the festival in Leipzig? Do you have in mind dominant issues (social, political or environmental, for instance) or the style of an author?

GL: Of course, we're also looking for the style of an author, but we have several sections in the festival. For example we have also an international competition, for the films we think are really really well done, like masterpieces. But we also have a competition for the young cinema, which is for the experiments. For example, the case where the filmmaker didn't really make it, he/she wanted to achieve something, to really innovate the genre but even if it was not absolutely successful, the film can go into this competition just to show in what new ways documentaries can widen their limits. Then we have a section for short films, a section for German doc-

umentaries, but also a competition for the best film in the section of work, so we look for the subject, but the film should meet a specific quality. We also



have a competition for films on democracy, because Leipzig was the place of the revolution. So we judge as well by which artistic means the artist was trying to tell his story.

Q: What do you think is the importance of documentaries today?

GL: I think that - from what I see from my festival, that they become more important. We realize that this started in 2001, after 9/11, it's then that people started to long not for another type of information, but for another way to look at things. Not black and white, but real stories behind big political events, as our world is really complex. And media mainly simplifies things. Documentaries don't simplify at all, but they show you the complexity of things and people are interested in this complexity. And particularly young people. And our audience is bigger every year, maybe because there are subjects that you cannot see on TV.

Q: Does the power you have of choosing between films enable you to send a message to the world? I am thinking that to a certain extent you can have a greater word to say than the director.

GL: Of course it has something to do with power, but this power doesn't make me happy, it's quite on the contrary that sometimes I feel scared by this power. Because I've made documentaries myself or I've contributed to them and I've known enough about the production of documentaries and how difficult it is and how much is connected and how important for the director is to be chosen at a festival. And I'm completely conscious about what my decision means because it's also about careers and jobs. If we don't select the film it could mean the end of a production company. And this doesn't make me happy at all, it makes it rather difficult.

Q: What's your favourite documentary for 2013?

GL: Hm. For example the one I personally like is one a bit about Eastern Europe, it's the film of Volker Koepp, he is one of the most important German filmmakers. He's an East German, coming from the deep tradition of the documentary, which means that he's really working with the image, he has a good cinematographer and he's done quite a few documentaries about this region.

by Diana Voinea



2011 Opening parade



2011 Alexandru Solomon



2011 Cristi Puiu



2011, Andreea Esca offering an award on behalf of "The One" magazine

Saturday, 19 October 2013



Astra Film, a truly spectacular festival!



Ionuț Teianu, director of "Afacerea Tanase", at the Q&A which followed the screening



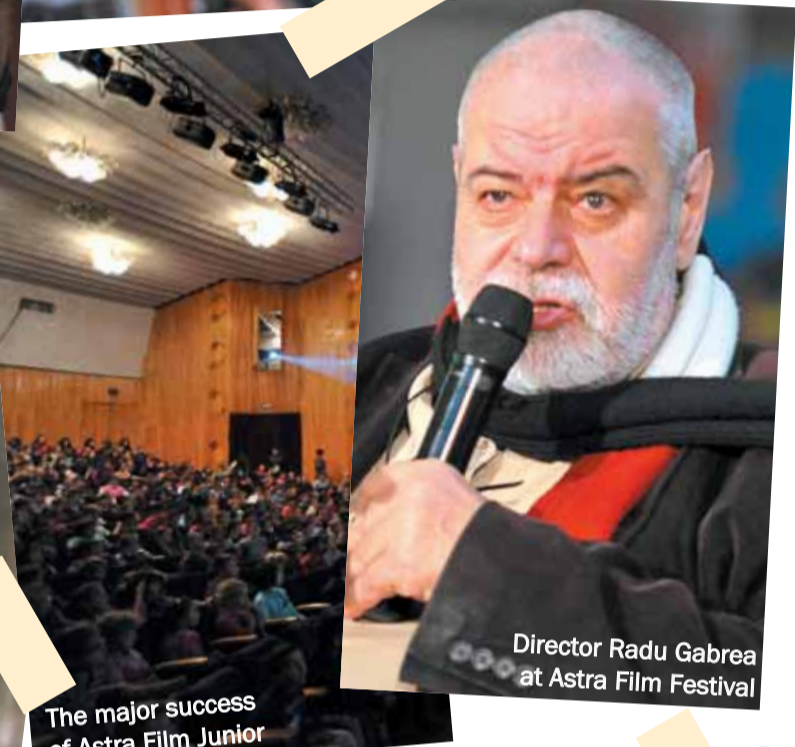
„Peste pădure“ band



Mircea Florian on the phone with Maria Tanase: a truly unique concert, only at AFF 2013!



Probably the youngest fan of the festival



Director Radu Gabrea at Astra Film Festival



Director Cristi Puiu, member of the jury



Astra Film Festival, a festival for all ages

The major success of Astra Film Junior



Meet the jury of AFF 2013!



2011 Kindergarten film screening in Astra Film Junior



2011 The public from "Father Arsenie Boca, A Man of God" screening



2012. Florin Ciobă

Feast your eyes on this: Krasna Malanka by Dmytro Sukholytkyy- Sobchuk



Screened in the Marshall hall of Casa de cultura a sindicatelor in Sibiu, "Krasna Malanka" marked a very special moment for the public of Astra Film Festival: the meeting with director Dmytro Sukholytkyy-Sobchuk. About his documentary, which is dedicated to a tradition of the Romanian minority in the Ukraine village Krasna (during the night, carol singers go from home to home, play practical jokes and interpret little plays in which everybody gets to play a part, and the whole procession is lead by a young bachelor in women's attire), the filmmaker said: "Malanka is the name of the Ukrainian tradion, while Romanians use the name of The Bear. In the region where

we shot, three different cultures intertwine, the Romanian, the Ukrainian and the German culture".

Asked if there is going to be a sequel to his film and if his next project would also involve the Romanian minority in Ukraine, director Dmytro Sukholytkyy-Sobchuk answered: "Shooting «Krasna Malanka» took four years. I remember working for a local television staion when a friend mentioned this very particular tradition. I went there as soon as I got the chance, and the first thing I shot was this special moment when the entire community gets together. Then I met more and more people in the Krasna village and the material started piling up. It was hard at first, because I was unfamiliar with Romanian culture. Furthermore, everybody there speaks Romanian. Needless to say, I couldn't utter a single word in your language, so I would carry a translator around everywhere I went. At first, they were suspicious of me, but I was able to win their trust in no time. All I can say is that, during the shooting, more than 200 litres of vodka were drunk... (he laughs) We took no part in it, of course, because we had work to do, so it's strictly the community that ahieved this wondrous feat. In any case, after four years, I think it's time for me to move on and tacke different subjects as well. So now, I'm working on the screenplay of my first fiction movie!"

Cătălin Olaru



ȘERBAN TĂTARU director of "Anatomy of a Departure"

**"The Romania of 20 years ago can only be
found on the rooftops now"**



In the "Anatomy of a Departure" documentary ("Anatomia unei plecări"), Șerban Tătaru, the film's director, asks his parents questions about the most important event in their lives - their departure from communist Romania. In this way, he manages to find the answers he seems to have been wanting for years and exposes the problems that remain unclear, more than 20 years since the event. Over the course of the film, the director transitions to uncomfortable questions and touches on the sensitive spots of his two subjects, making us feel like intruders that are faced with an intimate family conversation.

The story behind the story

During the q&a session that followed the projection of the film, the director Șerban Tătaru answered the question that was on



2012 Public at the
"The Truth about Holocaust" film



2012 Fervent debates in
Astra Film Festival's jury



2012. Master class Petr Lom



everyone's lips, regarding his parents reaction to the film.

"My parents liked the film, the way I made it that is, but I don't think they were too pleased with the way I portrayed them. Still, I chose to also use moments in which they don't feel comfortable while they're talking in order to show that the return to particular feelings is, more often than not, a painful and difficult process. Not showing the bits in which they don't want to talk or are searching for the right words would have meant just showing two parents telling a nice and mellow story about a sad time in their lives. Through these moments I wanted to add a second dimension to the first story that they are telling."

"The film is made for the type of public I've found in Sibiu"

Șerban believes that his public is divided into 2 groups: the people that are personally involved in this type of story, they're the sons and daughters of people that fled Romania during the communism era and that have told him that they long for this type of communication with their parents and another group, the people that don't have a good relationship with their parents and see the film as a lesson in dialogue and admire him for the brave way in which he seeks the answers to his questions.

About the public in Sibiu he has a separate opinion: "I liked the fact that there were older people in the room, some had actually known my father or my grandfather, because these are the people that truly know what the time my parents are talking about was like. Of course I'm also happy there were young people in the room but the film was partly made for the first group of people and I'm happy I discovered them in Sibiu".

A happy family after all

Thinking about how he feels now, when he sees the film and remembers childhood moments, the director says: "The film was made from interviews and retrospective moments, for which I retired to the rooftops, the only places where I found the country of my memories, the streets having been filled with advertisements. The texts I say are truly my thoughts that I recorded in a basement and are actually a sort of reflections that I recorded as they came to me. When I listen to those texts that I recorded I get sad because they show the essence of those painful moments".

Still, the director gives the answer to one of the key questions with a smile on his face: "Yes, we were a happy family and we still are. But the question of whether I really wanted to leave Romania remains open. Even today, I'm not even sure I wanted to leave."

Corina David

An Awesome Film with an Important Message

Although less exposed, documentary films serve a more critical social purpose than fiction films do, they either bring back to surface certain aspects from the past we might have forgotten or we might not have even known or they allow us to come into contact with certain stories what otherwise we may not have paid any attention to. Others, however, strive to bring to screen the contemporary zeitgeist by delving into society's whirlpool. In a year when the debate regarding the preservation of nature reaches unprecedented peaks in Romania, the Eco-CinematogrAFF festival section answers the cries of street protesters from around the country. One of the films featured in this section is Andrei Dăscălescu's "An Awesome Film", which focuses on the eco-educational work performed by volunteers for Tașuleasa eco-camp. During the Q&A session which followed the film screening, the director offered more insights into the subject matter and skipped over his own introduction, deeming Tașuleasa a more important issue to discuss. Last January, he started volunteering for Tașuleasa Social and has since become "addicted" to the experience, offering to make a film about it. The film is concerned with volunteering but at the same time it is about his own work as a volunteer, because volunteering involves more than just planting trees, it means finding the best way possible to put your own talent in the service of the cause you are supporting. For example, Marcel Iureș, who makes several appearances in the film talking about the camp, doesn't go there to dig holes in the ground for trees, but instead has performed in a meadow for the volunteers one of his own shows which in Bucharest is always fully booked; Ada Milea has held concerts, everyone is doing all they can. The immediate effect of the film is making everyone want to go to this camp, but the director's suggestion to whomever may want to get involved is for them to try and do something in their own cities to support the cause of environmental preservation and saving the planet.

Another of Andrei Dăscălescu's contributions was bringing various personalities from Romanian showbiz to support the project by holding concerts and cultural moments, names such as Robin and the Backstabbers and Maria Raducanu. It's nice to visit schools and have a presentation in front of about 75 people, but the result won't be as consequential as having a famous person back you up. When you see Marcel Iureș's support for the project you might listen more closely.

"Volunteering changes lives, but it changes yours, most of all" says someone in the audience, and the director agrees, adding that the time he has spent working on the project has changed him as a human being. He no longer seeks to work for money, but rather for bringing a change into the world. In the meantime he has become an activist, attending protests on a weekly basis and volunteering for several NGOs. Last, but not least, he stated that those close to him have noticed he has become a better, nicer person; however, he feels unable to comment on this.

Those who want to get involved with the project should know that on October 26th there will be an event where they will plant trees. More on this can be found on Tașuleasa Social's Facebook page that everyone was encouraged to like or comment on, which would greatly please all the team members.

Mihai Kolcsár



2012 The festival's video-bar



2012. Michael Stewart



2012 Sorin Botoșeanu



interview
DAN NUȚU
producer of
Aristoteles Workshop

Aristoteles Workshop and Astra Film Festival, a long-lasting friendship

What is your relationship with Astra Film?

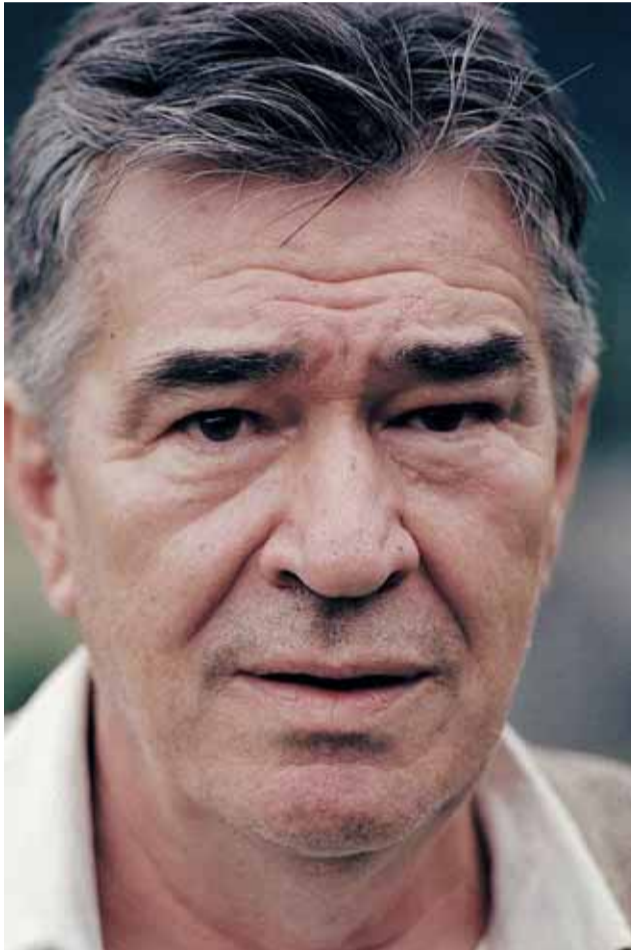
We started out with Aristoteles here in Sibiu, when the festival was already well established and held under high esteem. All I did was take advantage of all the opportunities Astra had to offer: spaces, equipment etc. Back then, for two years this is where everything would happen - the film theory classes on film in general and documentary in particular, which at the time lasted two weeks, took place in the office attic. It was very pleasant. Everything came from there, everything was being arranged through the means of Csilla and Dumitru. And in the first year, in spite of the limited extent of awareness on the part of the organizers, of the students, three excellent films resulted, out of which one has remained by number 1 preference, Adina Pintilie's "Don't Get Me Wrong", Corina Radu made another one and the third belongs to a Serb.

If we receive the necessary amount of money, I plan on making a package to include everything that Aristoteles has every produced.

What is Aristoteles?

It is an educational workshop. 16 participants are initially selected on the basis of a package, a film in whose production they were involved, regardless of the role they played there, be it of director, producer or cinematographer. A commission is assembled by Arte France, who were the first to offer their financial support. In our first year, we also received money from TVR and CNC and in the last couple of years we were only left with Arte and CNC, no one else came to our aid. The idea is to take 12 kids who weren't born yesterday, who know a thing or two about film, not necessarily about documentaries, and guide them along from the get-go by inviting experts - I'm not the one giving the lectures - from whom they can gain a general degree of knowledge about film, about documentary film. Afterwards they are able to go out there and hunt down subjects on their own, to set a time for shooting and then to go back and edit their material so that in the end they can hand me a half-hour documentary. What is interesting is that they are thrown beyond their comfort zone, which is both true for people from Bucharest and from the foreigners from Central and Eastern Europe. Everything is conducted in English so that there is common ground and therefore speaking English - maybe not expertly but at least conversational - is a requirement. The beautiful thing about it is that everyone who is travelling from outside Romanian borders, from Croatia, Bulgaria, Poland, Czech Republic feel at home because these countries have many similarities between them, but at the same time they're also foreigners, which I've always thought is a plus, because Romanians who know the language can always communicate with people from all over the place and are familiar with the lay of the land, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they know who they are dealing with, while the foreigners rely on the locals to ease their transition to their subjects. From the very start, what we had in mind was to keep them all under the same roof, meaning that they go to sleep at night and wake up in the morning thinking about their film.

We didn't have any commuters, let's say to travel from different neighborhoods in Bucharest and show up at the Peasant Museum in the morning. They sleep there, wake up there and at night they're dreaming about their film. This helps immensely because it creates a sense of unforced concentration, as they live in the same environment day in day out, you drink and eat together with the same people. And the 16 who in the past years, on account of financial reasons, turned



into 12, are divided into four groups of three, there used to be four. I put them up, feed them, equip them with cameras and editing tools and all they need to do is bring their talent and expertise and find a subject that is interesting to them, as well as us. And, thank God, throughout these eight years we've also enjoyed international recognition in big festivals such as Cannes, Leipzig, Locarno, where we have received awards. Which is damn good both for us at Aristoteles and for the students. Some of them have complained that we haven't advertised it enough, but word of mouth has been very vocal in Romania as well as abroad. Our former students speak of us and they only have lovely words of praise. For them it's a bucolic opportunity, but they also have their work cut out for them. It's a boot camp but it's also a Magic Mountain.

Where does Aristoteles take place and why there?

The first two editions were set in Cisnadioara and the subsequent ones in Sibiel, naturally with Sibiu in mind. First of all because I like it better in Sibiu than in Bucharest and secondly because we needed an open space to put everyone up, the students, the experts, the members of the jury. After Cisnadioara, Sibiel and Vama (in Suceava), we found a Bed & Breakfast large enough to host everyone. I think every little corner of Romania apart from Bucharest offers both beauty and a wide array of subjects. Many people have said that it would be better to do it closer to a city, but the students had no complaints about the accommodation in Vama, which is a village between Moldovenesti and Gura Humorului, but the Bed & Breakfast is gorgeous and as far as I'm concerned, as long as you have a good mind, you might as well make a documentary about cats, grandmothers, anything.

What is the demographic of the participants?

Young filmmakers, whatever that means. Young people in general, but we've also had applicants who were 58 - 59 years old whom you can't just tell "M'am,

or Sir, it's a bit too late to..." The fact that they have to have gone to film school already sets the lower age limit to around 21. In our first year we had this great 36 year old guy, so the higher age limit is set around there. Around 20-30. But I don't think that just because they're 19 or 20 they're still unripe, age is not what defines them, what makes the difference is their passion and their training. We've had 21-22 year old girls who knew more about film than some experts might, which is damn exciting. I'm exaggerating, of course. But it feels so amazing when you see everyone preoccupied, that they're eager to work and also know how to do it. That they stay up at night watching the films recommended to them by the experts. You see them wanting to do everything perfectly and that's what it's all about, because as a school or workshop it's purpose isn't to educate but to perfect. Regardless of where they come from, by interacting with the others and with their trainers, you get a slightly different feeling from them by the 5th week. And when you hear them saying how much they enjoyed it, how they want to do it again - we can't have them for a second time, but they want to come back - it's warm the cockles of your heart. It makes you very happy.

No one will cut off their heads if their film isn't very good, or is mediocre, that's not what matters, what's important is how you come out at the end of the five weeks, whether you learned something or not. And knowing what you did wrong and why. As Beckett said "Ever tried. Ever Failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better". It's more important to make mistakes than it is to receive awards.

Apart from submitting their own movies to festivals, how does Aristoteles help them gain greater exposure?

Depending of how good their film turns out to be, we recommend that they should immediately start sending their films to all the festivals we know. I don't know each and every small festival in Poland or Croatia, but naturally I encourage them to send them everywhere. As beautiful as the experience might be, it is also ambitious, whilst it's slightly awry to think that you can make a masterpiece or a complete film in just five weeks starting from scratch, and to shoot it, edit it and design the sound too. After Aristoteles I advise them to stay together in teams and keep working and then to keep me posted with the development of the film. It's a kind of duty, if I can call it that, both on my part and on theirs to get the film out there, regardless of how big the festival is, not everyone needs to be invited to Berlin or Cannes.

Does the national television broadcaster manifest interest in these films?

No, no one is interested. No one. They'd probably show more interest if you sold them empty space. And I don't just mean the Aristoteles films, but documentaries in general. For documentary filmmakers, their whole life is about being accepted to festivals, or being in the news once or twice. Television does nothing for Thomas Ciulei, for Iepanu or for Ujica.

What is the farthest place from where you have had participants?

We've had people from New Zealand, from Australia, from Canada, from South America, Finland, Norway, America, Los Angeles show interest. But I can't take them. It's a school oriented towards Central and Eastern Europe. It's in our profile, it's what Arte wants, but they always attempt the impossible. We took on a very talented girl from Chile, but whose husband was Austrian and we managed something in the end.

What does the future have in store for Aristoteles?

We're doing our best, but it also depends on CNC, on money. And if things get in serious trouble with CNC, then it will be bad for Aristoteles and for Astra and for film in general.

by Mihai Kolcsár

PARAGRAFF

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Chief editor: Cătălin Olaru

Reporters: Corina David, Diana Voinea, Loredana Ghidarcea, Mihai Kolcsar, Teodora Lascu

Desktop publishing: Nicu Ilie, Carmen Corbu