

English Title: ARSENIE. AN AMAZING AFTERLIFE

Original Title: ARSENIE. VIAȚA DE APOI

Director: Alexandru Solomon

Screenwriter: Alexandru Solomon

Producers: Ada Solomon, Diana Caravia (microFILM)

Co-producers: Paul Thiltges, Adrien Chef (PTD)

Camera: Tudor Platon, Marius Beșu

Editing: Cătălin Cristuțiu, Sophie Reiter

Sound Recording: Marin Cazacu, Mirel Cristea

Sound Editing: Dragoș Cătăraș

Sound Design: Alin Zăbrăuțeanu

Dialogue Editing and Premix: Alexandru Dumitru

Mixing: Thomas Besson

Original Music: Alin Zăbrăuțeanu

Handpan and flute improvisation: Andrei Coteș

a microFILM production in co-production with Paul Thiltges Distributions

Romania - Luxemburg, 2023

96 min.

FORMAT: DCP / Digital

Color & BW

SCREEN RATIO: 16:9

FRAMERATE: 25

Original language(s): Romanian

Language of subtitles on print: English

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## SHORT SYNOPSIS

A dead monk's gaze is hypnotizing the masses, becomes a very profitable brand and is about to be sanctified by the Romanian church. Following in Arsenie's footsteps, we embark on a fictionalized pilgrimage, that leads us – with humour and fantasy - through our present confusion and global fears. No afterlife guaranteed.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The film is based on a pilgrimage that I organized myself, after participating in many travels with Christian associations in the past 4 years. The observational rushes from these previous pilgrimages will be shortly introduced at the beginning of the film, setting the real circumstances and my troubles in finding a place in this world to which I feel so alienated. They are the trigger for a more fictionalized approach, that is the backbone of the film: a ready-made pilgrimage for which I did a casting with extras that are religious, love Arsenie Boca but have filming experience and all the traits that come with the

aspiration of becoming „a film star”. During this pilgrimage, we travel to different places where Arsenie lived, places of worship, marketing and historical meaning. We read texts from the *Securitate* files on Arsenie, we reenact some of his miracles and we talk together about them. From time to time, I have separate, intimate conversations with the pilgrims, that give us a window into their lives and beliefs. The casting includes many generations, from the older Orthodox nostalgic about the communist times (?!) to the young New-Age healers, from the protestant preacher to the mystical medical assistant. Now and then people start singing religious chants or Tibetan handpan music. On the bus I serve as a travel guide, slipping info on Arsenie’s life and, mostly, his afterlife – the way the Church and the media have shaped his public posterity. Father Arsenie’s history is, first of all, the history of an image, an image that he has been carefully forging during his lifetime and that became a success story after he died. We pass along among the pilgrims Arsenie’s photos, the ones that he set-up himself, as well as the ones taken by undercover agents.

### **SHORT DIRECTOR’S NOTE**

A phenomenon issued from this endless post-communist «transition » taking place since 1989, from the collapse of our values and institutions, the figure of Father Arsenie represents an answer not only to typical Romanian frustrations, but also to the fears of the entire contemporary world: the threat of the exhaustion of our planet, the imminence of an apocalyptic war, the spectrum of deadly epidemics etc. The myth of Arsenie seems to offer «support and solutions» with regard to all these problems. The film will thus speak not only about a local phenomenon, but will go beyond our frontiers.

### **Alexandru Solomon bio filmo**

In the early 1990s, Solomon emerged as a young director of photography and he started making documentaries aside from filming feature films. Solomon was among the first Romanian film-makers who committed themselves to a then compromised genre; today, he is one of the leading political film-makers from Romania and active on the international documentary scene. His recent work triggered public debates about the function of documentary film within the public sphere and contributed to re-establishing documentary film as an arena for reframing Romania’s recent history.

Solomon’s previous work, “The Great Communist Bank Robbery” (2004), broadcast on Arte and as part of BBC4’s prestigious Storyville series, was awarded Best Film at the History Film Festival in Pessac, France and the Prize for Social Values at Documenta Madrid. His ‘Cold Waves’ (2007) is a chilling slice of political history that played for 12 weeks in Romanian theatres. It deals with the love and hate story between Radio Free Europe, the Romanian audiences and the communist regime. “Kapitalism - our secret recipe” (2010), speaks of the rise of a new ruling class in the East (produced for Arte and RTBF with Media support). “Tarzan’s Testicles” (2017), premiered in Karlovy Vary, is a film about utopias & a metaphoric drama that threads the similar destinies of monkeys & men.

[www.alexandrusolomon.ro](http://www.alexandrusolomon.ro)