

HISTORY OF LOVE

DOROTEJA
NADRAH
KRISTOFFER
JONER

a film by
SONJA
PROSENC



Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival
Official Selection – Competition

SYNOPSIS

»Seventeen-year-old Iva is in the process of coming to terms with the death of her mother. Influenced by this deep personal loss and by the discovery that she didn't know everything about her mom, the girl slowly immerses herself into a strange, almost dreamlike world far from reality.

After her internationally successful debut *The Tree* (KVIFF 2014), Sonja Prosenc returns to Karlovy Vary with her second picture, in which she continues to develop a boldly constructed and distinctive poetic that attacks the viewer's senses, as well as a narratively loose style and an ability to put a story together with the aid of the subtlest of suggestions.« (Lenka Tyrpáková, Karlovy Vary IFF)

History of Love is an elegiac tableau of a family dealing with the loss of the mother in the light of a new discovery about her. We witness the struggle of those who are left behind – people incapable of sharing their loss and connecting to each other in their almost physical pain, who are thus in danger of becoming nothing more than “bodies” of grief - until something is sacrificed and the family is able to reconnect.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

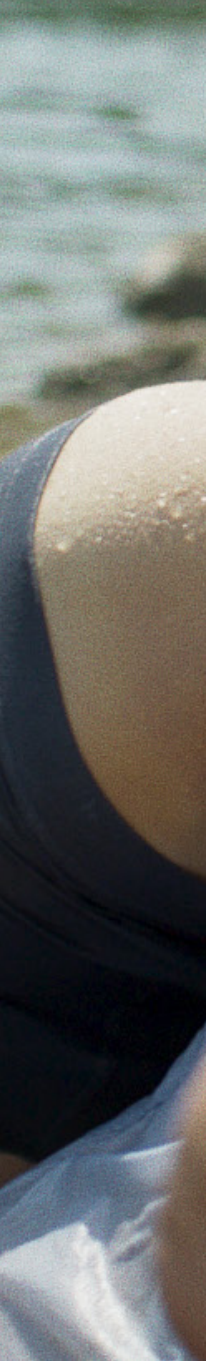
In my first film **The Tree**, I focused on three distinct forms of imprisonment – physical, within a system, and by our own feelings of guilt – all of this by means of a single story about a blood feud. During the shooting of the film a member of my family was dying and later on I decided to venture away from this kind of commentary on a social issue in order to follow the intimate tale of Iva and her family. However, the urge to explore the characters' inability to connect with each other during the worst moments of their lives still derives from **a reflection on society: the currently prevalent nihilism, violence, and emotional detachment**. One of the possible oppositions to this, which I have tried to keep in mind while making the film, is beauty as an aesthetic as well as an ethical category.

I focused on **Iva**, confronted with her mother's past that she cannot accept. As we all are, she is drawn to judging, labelling. Only when she is able to understand (or at least allow a possibility that there is something she doesn't understand) and to perceive different points of view, she can develop compassion for the human condition. In this sense *History of Love* is also a coming-of-age film. Together with the actors, we created **characters** who are **alienated** from themselves and each other, while we can at the same time sense the pain that they cannot escape as well as their underlying need to connect.

Similar to *The Tree*, which was structured as a multi-protagonist nonlinear narrative, *History of Love* is also marked by nonlinearity - corresponding to the complex experience of reality by the characters.

Stepping away from a linear narration, the film builds on the main character's subjective experience, and uses the story merely as a framework. It required a very precise **screenplay** in order to determine the exact line between how much of a story to present without creating an impression that the point of the film is to tell a story, while still providing the most appropriate story clues to create

(next page)



a film universe wherein we can explore the inner states of the characters as well as the more abstract concepts of human condition. I have had an opportunity to develop this during a very fruitful collaboration with Midpoint and Torino Film Lab script consultants. Beside the narrative structure, sound plays an important role in this.

The sound design for this film has been a special and quite a long process in itself, as the sound in this film carries at least as much of the film's weight as the visual narration does. It connects the parts that could be perceived as past and present, into **a meandering of events, memories and thoughts**, with shots or sequences **echoing** variations and details; to escape causality as the ruling storytelling principle and lean toward synchronicity or juxtaposition. Building the experience through precise sequences of images, rhythm, atmosphere, requires a benevolent and sometimes patient viewer, which is not easy when the perception of film is becoming increasingly focused or limited on what can be analytically/intellectually grasped or read: in this case bare-boned plot/storyline.

»When we experience a film, we consciously prime ourselves for illusion. Putting aside will and intellect, we make way for it in our imagination. The sequence of pictures plays directly on our feelings. Music works in the same fashion; I would say that there is no art form that has so much in common with film as music. Both affect our emotions directly, not via the intellect. And film is mainly rhythm; it is inhalation and exhalation in continuous sequence.« (Ingmar Bergman)



ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

After she graduated from the university, Sonja attended Berlinale and SarajevoTalents, co-founded the Monoo production house, and was selected for TorinoFilmLab. Her award-winning and critically acclaimed first feature **The Tree** has also been a Slovenian candidate for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Her approach to film language has so far been appreciated by both cinephiles and film critics, and she was described as **»a distinctively talented young filmmaker ... who can tell a story in a startlingly unconventional manner«** by **The Hollywood Reporter**. Sonja has also been selected among **eight notable up-and-coming European female directors by Cineuropa**.

Her second feature History of Love, a Slovenian-Italian-Norwegian co-production, has received several development awards and has also been supported by Eurimages.

A THOUGHT

»What I love about Sonja's films is how she dares to avoid the proved and established narrative principles. Every time she invents a film language, which is completely hers and which comes as close as possible to the definition of 'pure cinema'. Her History of Love is an impressive meditation on human fragility.«

**Damjan Kozole, film director,
winner of the 2016 Karlovy Vary IFF Best Director Award**



CAST AND CREW

CAST Doroteja Nadrah • Kristoffer Joner • Zita Fusco
Gregor Zemljič • Matija Vastl

WRITER-DIRECTOR Sonja Proscenc

CINEMATOGRAPHER Mitja Ličen, ZFS

EDITOR Frida Eggum Michaelsen

MAKE UP DESIGNER Alenka Nahtigal

COSTUME DESIGNER Leo Kulaš

SET DESIGNER Vasja Kokelj

SOUND DESIGN Riccardo Spagnol • Julij Zornik • Gisle Tveito

CO-FINANCED BY Slovenian Film Centre • Fondo per l'audiovisivo del
Friuli Venezia Giulia • Friuli Venezia Giulia Film
Commission • Norsk Filminstitutt • Mediefondet
Zefyr • Filmkraft Rogaland

SUPPORTED BY EURIMAGES

WITH RTV Slovenija • RAI Cinema

CO-PRODUCERS Nadia Trevisan / NEFERTITI FILM
Jarle Bjørknes / INCITUS FILMS

PRODUCERS Rok Sečen • Sonja Proscenc / MONOO

COUNTRIES Slovenia / Italy / Norway

After *The Tree* this is the second collaboration on a feature between the director Sonja Proscenc and cinematographer **Mitja Ličen**, one of the most prolific members of the younger generation of Slovenian directors of photography, awarded nationally and internationally.

In sound postproduction **Riccardo Spagnol** (Italy) was joined with a Slovenian sound designer **Julij Zornik** (*The High Sun* by Dalibor Matanić, winner of Jury Prize in *Un Certain Regard* 2015) and **Gisle Tveito** from Norway (who also worked on Joachim Trier's *Louder than Bombs* and *Thelma*).

History of Love presents a young Slovenian actress, **Doroteja Nadrah** as Iva, known particularly for her role in the film *Class Enemy*, and her onscreen partner is Norwegian actor **Kristoffer Joner**. Joner also appeared in the Scandinavian box-office hit and Norwegian Academy Award candidate *The Wave*; in *King of Devil Island*, and in *The Revenant* by Alejandro G. Iñárritu. He is a recipient of the EFP Shooting Star Award at the Berlin Film Festival.





Summary of the film libretto

Iva is struggling to cope with the loss of her mother, who died in a car accident. As she begins to suspect that her mother, an opera singer, had an affair, Iva's image of the family starts to fall apart. She pulls away from her father, her brother and her sister and starts stalking the opera conductor who was supposedly in a relationship with her mother. When she breaks into his home, her suspicion is confirmed.

Alone with her pain, she starts looking for space to grieve. She follows the river, leaving behind her family, her friends, the city. In her hideaway by the river, near the place of the accident, the conductor finds her. The unexpected couple, Iva and her mother's lover, embark on the journey into the world between dream and reality.

For Iva, the river is a source of a deep attraction and anxiety at the same time. The water, in which as a high diver, she used to be in her natural element, becomes her nemesis once the river swallows the car and takes her mother's life with it.

The further away from the place of the accident, the more Iva starts to recognise and accept the pain of the other; she starts accepting what she used to reject. But on their journey, Iva and the conductor are not alone. They are being followed by Iva's brother, enraged by his mother's uncovered secrets and the relationship between Iva and the conductor as he perceives it from a distance, fuelled by a desire for revenge. As Iva refuses to return home, her brother comes dangerously close. Amid a swirl of chaos, he brings about a violent resolution of the triangle.

CONTACT

Rok Sečen / Monoo

e: rok@monoo.si

m: +386 41 865 751

www.monoo.si

Nerina Kocjančič, Slovenian Film Centre

e: nerina.kocjancic@sfc.si

m: +386 41 725 636

INFO

Slovenia - Italy - Norway / 105 min, color, DCP

DEVELOPED IN COOPERATION WITH



DEVELOPMENT AWARDS



DEVELOPED WITH THE SUPPORT OF



CO-FINANCED BY (SLOVENIA/ITALY/NORWAY)



SUPPORTED BY



PRODUCED BY

