



This world is surely missing something.

VIA CARPATIA

by Klara Kočańska, Kasper Bajon



**Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival**
East of the West – Competition

VIA CARPATIA

Poland/ Republic of Macedonia/ Czech Republic 2018
75'
color

CAST & CREW

Directed by

Klara Kochańska, Kasper Bajon

Screenplay

Kasper Bajon, Klara Kochańska, Julia Kijowska,
Piotr Borowski based on the idea by Kasper Bajon

Cinematography

Zuza Kernbach, Julian A. Ch. Kernbach

Cast

Julia Kijowska, Piotr Borowski, Bajram Severdžan,
Dorota Pomykała

Sound Design

Michał Fojcik MPSE, Bartłomiej Bogacki

Editing

Barbara Fronc, Marcin Sucharski

Producer

Agnieszka Kurzydło

Production Company

MD4 Sp. z o.o.

Co-producers

Sektor Film Angela Nestorovska,
Vladimir Anastasov (Macedonia)
Heaven's Gate Viktor Tauš
(Czech Republic),
Chimney Poland Marcin Drabiński,
Zuzanna Hencz,
Sound Mind Michał Fojcik
Kijora Film Anna Gawlita,
Tomasz Wolski

Co-financing

Polish Film Institute
Macedonian Film Agency

Sales agent

IKH Pictures Promotion
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*Filmmakers on the set, from the left: Piotr Borowski, Julia Kijowska,
Zuzanna Kernbach, Julian Kernbach, Klara Kochańska, Kasper Bajon.*





A thirtysomething couple makes for a refugee camp on the Macedonian-Greek border. As the horizon gets rocky, so does the trip.

SYNOPSIS

Piotr and Julia for months have been planning their holiday. Unfortunately their plans are ruined by Piotr's mother: she wants to bring home his father, who has been staying for months at one of the refugee camps on the Macedonian- Greek. Despite his strong doubts Piotr agrees to take the challenge. And so instead of an all-inclusive holiday, the married couple starts in a tiring journey to the South, during which they will have to answer some fundamental questions ...

HITTING THE ROAD WITH **VIA CARPATIA** – A CONVERSATION WITH KLARA KOCHAŃSKA, KASPER BAJON, JULIA KIJOWSKA, PIOTR BOROWSKI, ZUZA KERNBACH AND JULIAN A. CH. KERNBACH

How did the idea for the film come about?

Klara: During an intense, late-night conversation between me and Kasper. Poland's new government had just refused to provide shelter for a few hundred refugees, even though the previous government had an agreement with the European Union to do so. We felt really helpless and we wanted to do something about it. As artists we are all too often at the mercy of the decisions of public institutions, on the volatility of the film industry, and on the whims and good will of other people. This constrains our creativity. We wanted to do something to break free of these limitations. And we wanted to do it right away. It was Kasper who finally said: **"Let's just take a car, a couple of actors, head south and make a movie!"**

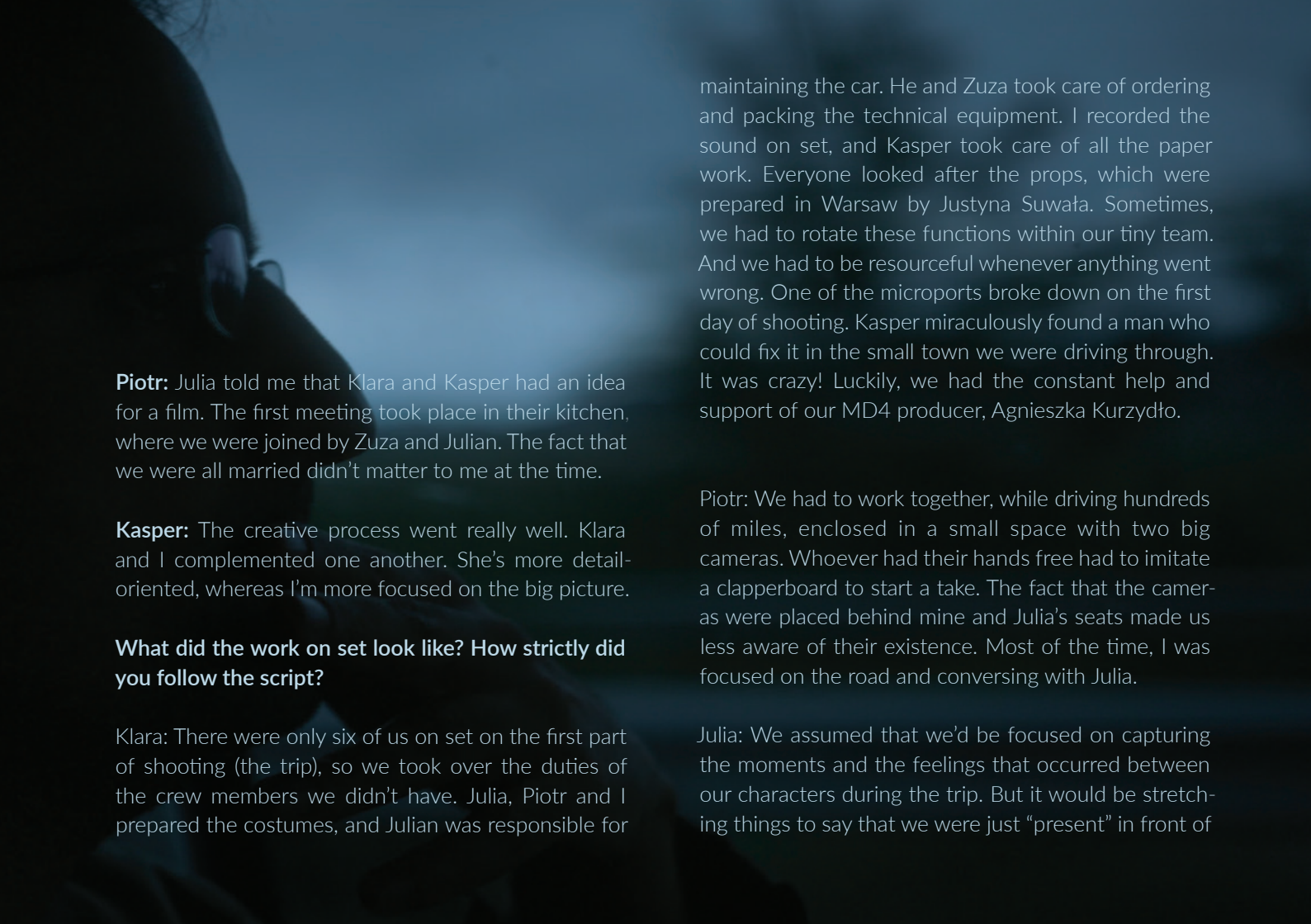
Kasper: The other impulse was a long talk about Polish cinema and the fact it lacks ethnic diversity. The protagonists are usually Caucasian Catholics, as they are the most prevalent, and thus the most privileged,

ethnic group. However, we have a lot of friends in Poland who are neither white nor Catholic, and they are left out of the official narrative.

The creative team comprises three couples. Why did you decide to work on a film with your significant others?

Klara: We knew that we'd be on a shoestring budget, so we wanted to work with people who'd enjoy making the film, and with whom we could spend several weeks in a small, closed space. Kasper and I happen to be friends with two talented couples who share the same profession - cinematography and acting.

Zuza: We knew from day one that Klara and Kasper wanted to work with us. The only challenge was making democratic decisions, as one person usually has the final say. Here, we had to discuss everything,, but it worked out really well.



Piotr: Julia told me that Klara and Kasper had an idea for a film. The first meeting took place in their kitchen, where we were joined by Zuza and Julian. The fact that we were all married didn't matter to me at the time.

Kasper: The creative process went really well. Klara and I complemented one another. She's more detail-oriented, whereas I'm more focused on the big picture.

What did the work on set look like? How strictly did you follow the script?

Klara: There were only six of us on set on the first part of shooting (the trip), so we took over the duties of the crew members we didn't have. Julia, Piotr and I prepared the costumes, and Julian was responsible for

maintaining the car. He and Zuza took care of ordering and packing the technical equipment. I recorded the sound on set, and Kasper took care of all the paper work. Everyone looked after the props, which were prepared in Warsaw by Justyna Suwała. Sometimes, we had to rotate these functions within our tiny team. And we had to be resourceful whenever anything went wrong. One of the microports broke down on the first day of shooting. Kasper miraculously found a man who could fix it in the small town we were driving through. It was crazy! Luckily, we had the constant help and support of our MD4 producer, Agnieszka Kurzydło.

Piotr: We had to work together, while driving hundreds of miles, enclosed in a small space with two big cameras. Whoever had their hands free had to imitate a clapperboard to start a take. The fact that the cameras were placed behind mine and Julia's seats made us less aware of their existence. Most of the time, I was focused on the road and conversing with Julia.

Julia: We assumed that we'd be focused on capturing the moments and the feelings that occurred between our characters during the trip. But it would be stretching things to say that we were just "present" in front of

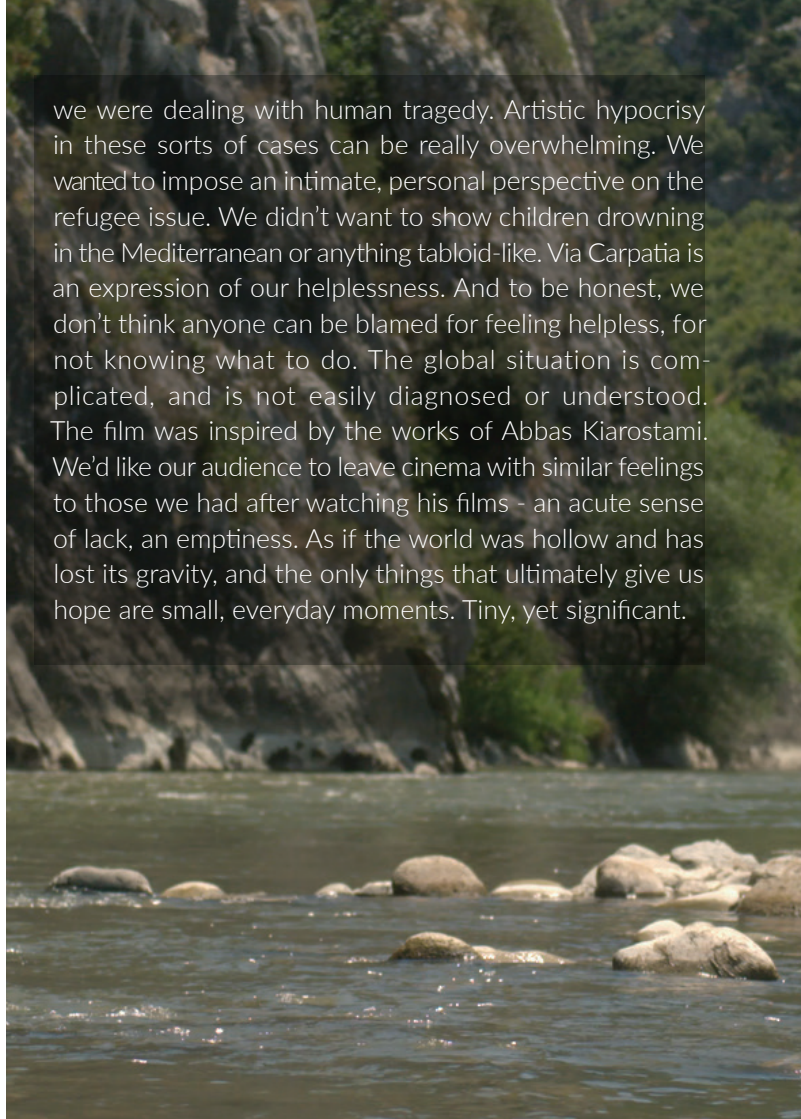
the camera and nothing more. It was a very special type of presence – we were always focused and we kept an eye on each other the whole time. We were constantly on the lookout for bits and pieces that would be interesting for the film. Since Piotr and I know each other intimately, we knew when the other person was “acting”, we could hear the false tones in the dialogues. That’s why we kept our real names.

One of the themes of the film is the refugee crisis and the lack of an appropriate response from Europe. How important is this issue to you?

Julia: This subject touches us personally. While working on the story that Kasper wrote, we wanted to explore and add ideas and experiences of our own. We became something more than just a group of actors, directors and cinematographers for this project. We formed a film crew that confronted reality, and the dilemmas imposed by the world in the best way we could. That certain sense of unease was something that we all had in common, and that’s what inspired us to make this film.

Kasper and Klara: From the very first, we knew that we didn’t want to prey on the refugee crisis. After all,

we were dealing with human tragedy. Artistic hypocrisy in these sorts of cases can be really overwhelming. We wanted to impose an intimate, personal perspective on the refugee issue. We didn’t want to show children drowning in the Mediterranean or anything tabloid-like. *Via Carpatia* is an expression of our helplessness. And to be honest, we don’t think anyone can be blamed for feeling helpless, for not knowing what to do. The global situation is complicated, and is not easily diagnosed or understood. The film was inspired by the works of Abbas Kiarostami. We’d like our audience to leave cinema with similar feelings to those we had after watching his films – an acute sense of lack, an emptiness. As if the world was hollow and has lost its gravity, and the only things that ultimately give us hope are small, everyday moments. Tiny, yet significant.





Returning from a long trip means that you have many stories to tell. Can you share just one?

Julia: Our characters were supposed to travel across Europe with their pet-tortoise. However, just as we were about to leave, we found that we didn't have a permit to take the animal across the Macedonian border. We decided to travel with an empty cage and do some reshooting with the actual tortoise when we got back.

Kasper: I remember telling everyone not to worry, because "Macedonia is the land of the tortoise". Naturally, I didn't know anything about Macedonian fauna.

Julia: I'll never forget Kasper's face when he noticed a big old tortoise walking our way one day. We were sitting on a concrete terrace in a creepy communist hotel in Macedonia, having breakfast, and then we saw it - one of those small miracles that every filmmaker counts on.



CAST AND CREW'S BIO

Klara Kochańska

Klara (b. 1984) is a Polish film director and writer. She first studied at Warsaw University and recently graduated from the Faculty of Directing at the Łódź Film School. Her student film *Tenants* won a Student Academy Award from the American Film Academy,, and the Grand Prix at the Warsaw Film Festival, the "Grand OFF" Film Festival, the Hong Kong Student Film Festival, the Moscow Student Film Festival, and the Xining First International Film Festival. *Via Carpatia* is Klara's full-length directorial debut.

Kasper Bajon

Kasper (b. 1983) is a Polish writer, poet and director. He has published two novels, *Klug* and *Koń Alechina*, and two volumes of poetry. He worked as 1AD on *Daas*, *The Butler*, *Maiden Vows* and *The Foundation*, and co-wrote the screenplay for *Tenants*. *Via Carpatia* is his full-length feature debut.

Zuza Kernbach (Pyda)

Zuza (b. 1983) is Polish cinematographer. She is a graduate of the Łódź Film School. She won a Golden Tadpole (for best cinematography in a student film) at the 2013 Camerimage Film Festival, for *Such a Landscape*. Despite her youth, she has already worked with some of Poland's leading auteur directors, including Wojciech Smarzowski, Jan Jakub Kolski and Artur Urbański.

Julian A. Ch. Kernbach

Julian (b. 1985) is a German-Polish cinematographer. He is a graduate of the Łódź Film School. He has already worked with some of Poland's leading auteur directors, including Jan Jakub Kolski, Wojciech Smarzowski and cinematographer Arkadiusz Tomiak.

Julia Kijowska

Julia (b. 1981) is one of the leading Polish actors of her generation. She graduated from the Acting Faculty of The Aleksander Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Art in Warsaw. She has starred in Agnieszka Holland's *In Darkness*, Wojciech Smarzowski's *Mighty Angel*, Marcin Koszałka's *The Red Spider*, Tomasz Wasilewski's *United States of Love*, and many other films. She was awarded at the 2012 Thessaloniki Film Festival for her lead role in Sławomir Fabicki's *Love*.

Piotr Borowski

Piotr (b. 1977) is a Polish actor. He graduated from the Acting Faculty of The Aleksander Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Art in Warsaw in 2000. He has starred in some of Poland's most popular films, including the period drama *Quo Vadis*,



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ABOUT THE PRODUCER

MD4 (Mental Disorder 4) is a film production company based in Warsaw and Kraków. The company was established in 2011 by people connected with Zentropa International Poland. The Head Producer and CEO is Agnieszka Kurzydło.

MD4 has produced several feature films that have been very well-received at many international film festivals. The primary mission of MD4 is to work with first and second time directors, and to create space for them in Poland and internationally. MD4 is a creative environment that brings together Poland's most promising writers, directors, composers, editors, etc. of the up-and-coming generation, who have a passion for making innovative films that deal with Polish society, history and culture, but which also appeal to an international audience.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:

- 2018** **Via Carpatia** dir. Klara Kochańska, Kasper Bajon.
- 2018** **The Fugue** dir. Agnieszka Smoczyńska.
- 2016** **The Red Captain** dir. Michał Kollár; *World premiere at the 2016 Tallinn Black Nights IFF; First Features Competition;*
- 2015** **The Red Spider** dir. Marcin Koszałka; *World premiere in Competition at the 2015 Karlovy Vary IFF; Selected awards: FIPRESCI Prize and Best Director, 16th Go East Wiesbaden IFF; Best Director, 27th East & West Orenburg FF;*
- 2014** **Kebab & Horoscope** dir. Grzegorz Jaroszek; *World premiere, 2014 Karlovy Vary IFF; Selected awards: Best Debut Film, 2014 Raindance IFF; Best International Film, 2015 Rome Independent FF; Grand Prix, 2015 Kinopolska FF.*
- 2013** **In the name of** dir. Małgośka Szumowska; *World premiere in Competition at 2013 Berlinale; Selected awards: Teddy Award, Silver Lions, Gdynia FF; Best Film, Dortmund-Koln IFF.*
- 2012** **Baby Blues** dir. Katarzyna Rosłaniec; *World premiere, 2012 Toronto IFF; European premiere, 2013 Berlinale; Selected awards: Crystal Bear and Special Mention, 2013 Berlinale, Generation 14thplus; Special Jury Prize, Taipei IFF; Best Polish Film, Off Camera IFF.*



VIA CARPATIA

KLARA KOCHAŃSKA KASPER BAJON JULIA KIJOWSKA
PIOTR BOROWSKI ZUZANNA KERNBACH JULIAN A. CH. KERNBACH

DIRECTED BY KLARA KOCHAŃSKA KASPER BAJON WRITTEN BY KASPER BAJON KLARA KOCHAŃSKA JULIA KIJOWSKA PIOTR BOROWSKI

DIRECTORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY ZUZANNA KERNBACH JULIAN A. CH. KERNBACH

CAST JULIA KIJOWSKA PIOTR BOROWSKI DOROTA POMYKALA BAHAM SEVERDZAN

EDITORS MARCIN SUCHARSKI BARBARA FRONC SOUND DESIGNER MICHAŁ FOJCIK SOUND ON SET JAN REY KLARA KOCHAŃSKA MUSIC CONSULTANT JAN DUSZYŃSKI ART DIRECTOR WARSAW SHOOTING JUSTYNA SUWAŁA PROPS JUSTYNA SUWAŁA MICHAŁ KASPEREŁ COSTUME MAKE UP WARSAW SHOOTING ANNA GORODSKA COSTUME GREEK SHOOTING POJA TETI HOLOU

LINE PRODUCER DAGMARA PIASECZKA PRODUCTION MANAGERS BEATA LEJBK (MACEDONIAN SHOOTING) KAMILA KUŚ (GREEK SHOOTING)

PRODUCTION SUPPORT KINGA KRZEMIŃSKA JANUSZ DĄBKIEWICZ NATALIA SIWICKA IGOR GRUBBACH (MACEDONIAN SHOOTING) ANDREAS SIADIMAS (GREEK SHOOTING)

PRODUCER MICHAŁ KURZYDŁO MACEDONIAN CO-PRODUCERS VLADIMIR ANASTASOV ANGELA NESTOROVSKA CZECH CO-PRODUCER VIKTOR TALUS

CO-PRODUCERS KLARA KOCHAŃSKA KASPER BAJON JULIA KIJOWSKA PIOTR BOROWSKI ZUZANNA KERNBACH JULIAN A. CH. KERNBACH

ZUZANNA HENICZ MARCIN GRABŃSKI MICHAŁ FOJCIK ANNA GAWUTTA TOMASZ WOLSKI

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