

GRESA PALLASKA

ARBEN BAJRAKTARAJ

ADEM KARAGA



Official Selection
WARSAW FILM FESTIVAL

WATERDROP

BY ROBERT BUDINA

2024 | ALBANIA, ROMANIA, ITALY
KOSOVO, NORTH MACEDONIA
COLOR
FORMAT: 5.1 / 1.85
LENGTH: 91M

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| SYNOPSIS

Aida, a tough business woman living in an Albanian town at the shores of Lake Ohrid, works a lucrative job as city planner responsible for the allocation of EU subsidies. While a large portion of these funds are pocketed by her corrupt boss, Aida isn't above taking the occasional bribe herself to keep her place in the ultra-masculine, patriarchal world. Her comfortable life is shattered, when her teenage son Mark gets accused of sexual assault by a class mate. Convinced of her sons innocence Aida starts to investigate on her own against the wishes of her husband and the police. During her search for the truth she encounters a wall of silence, envy and deep seated prejudice – and finally has to accept a heartbreaking reality.



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

WATERDROP IS A FILM ABOUT FAMILY, HYPOCRISY MORAL CORRUPTION, TRUTH, AND JUSTICE.

In February 2019 a teenage girl was raped by her peers in a small city in Albania. All public institutions and the media kept silent. The city concealed the event, to avoid its reputation being tarnished.

What struck me most was how the mothers of the accused boys attempted to justify their sons' actions while shifting blame to the victims. Several of these boys came from families where parents held positions of institutional power.

During this time, my two teenage sons had mutual friends with some of these boys. What particularly concerned me was their lack of reaction to these events. As a parent, I found myself in a moral dilemma. As human rights artists' and activist, I had frequently confronted those in positions of power. I became intrigued by the idea of exploring their moral dilemmas when their own children face such serious issues.

I didn't want to make a film about rape but explore the causes of this heinous crime.

What is society's relationship to justice?

in a society where corruption has replaced the moral compass, borders between good and evil, victim and perpetrator, criminal and prosecutor, the guilty and the injured, have been replaced by a cyclical connivance, where roles alternate in perpetuity. with such a reality as social background, I wanted to make a film about a mother who wants to know the truth about her rapist son, even though his crime mirrors the way she has built her life.

Career or family? Children upbringing or wellbeing? Falsity or truth? these dilemmas accompany individuals in every society, from the most backward to the most modern ones...

INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT BUDINA

RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILY, CAREER, SOCIETY AND POLITICS

Why did you locate the film in this setting of Lake Ohrid, and what does it evoke for you?

We only had an idea for the story that we wanted to tell, and before writing the script, we went to find the right location. This lake was a perfect fit for what we wanted to show with the inner lives of the characters. It also represents a kind of mythology of the city, as said at the beginning of the film. It's an actual myth from the ancient times of the city that was passed down through folklore. It's like the lake is the conscience of the city, where everything can be hidden, and inside is a monster that preserves those things. It's also the oldest lake in Europe. This inspired me to go deeper with the script – as deep as the lake

What about the symbolism of water that's present throughout the film and in the title?

I don't know if you are familiar with the Pythagorean cup – if you exceed a certain level with just a drop of water, all of the water spills out of the receptacle. With this metaphor, I wanted to express the fact that a mere drop of water can change everything, like in the life of Aida. But also, there is a saying in Albania that a single drop of water can wash a boy, but the entire sea is not enough to wash a girl. This means that if a girl does something

“dirty”, let's say, people will be prejudiced against her, but it's not the same for a boy. I am speaking about ancient times in Albania, when this metaphor was much more universal.

The protagonist, Aida, is a bit of an antihero at the beginning when she actively fights against the victim of the crime by believing her son is innocent.

It's very delicate. Why did we construct her character to be so complex? Some years ago in Albania, there was not only one rape, but different rapes in different cities, where teenagers were assaulted by their classmates. Most of those stories were covered up by the people, the media, the mothers or the rapists. In a way, those feeding masculinity in Albania are also the women. That's why we want to show how a mother can hide a crime committed by her own son against another woman, and to enter into her conscience through this story. The second thing is that Albania is a very patriarchal country, but Aida goes against that. She wants to be the centre of the attention. She wants everything until the day her son commits this crime. It's disconnecting her from her own emotional world. We worked on the script for almost three years. We wanted to have something very deep, like a kind of anatomy of our society, but also of the relationship you have with your family, career, society and politics.

Gresa Pallaska does a superb job of bringing Aida to life without alienating the audience.

Casting the film was not so easy, because the role of Aida is very complex. We began the casting in Albania because I wanted to have Albanian actors. But we couldn't find Aida in Albania, so we expanded the casting into Kosovo. They are Albanian-speaking, but it's another dialect there, a northern dialect, and I wanted it to be from Southern Albania. Something magical happened with Gresa. We had four candidates, and I went to Pristina to test two of them, and with her, everything happened like it would in a fairy tale. She captured my very thoughts without even speaking. This was something that had never happened to me before. I was not focused on finding "great actresses"; I wanted to find great people who shared my feelings about the story.

Was there one story in particular that inspired you, or was it an amalgamation of what you had read or known?

To tell you the truth, there was one story in particular. Officials covered it up because they didn't want to show that the city was dirty or had immoral values. The ones who shocked me the most were the politicians who made [the identity of] the victim public. That's why we are not putting the spotlight on the victim, but instead on the rapists.

In my life as an intellectual, let's say, I have been an activist for rights, art and so on, and I have met a lot of people in power who are one thing in public, while in private, they are totally different. I have seen that inside of them, they have myriad human crises. I thought, "These people can live with a clean conscience when they do these kinds of things." That's why I wanted to explore this character that wields power, as sometimes, people like this hurt people with their power. I wanted to see their moral conscience and the drama it creates.





ROBERT BUDINA

Robert Budina, is an Albanian independent filmmaker and producer. His first short LULEBORË participated in 40 festivals worldwide, winning awards in Tiff (Al), Algarve (Pt), Tanger (Ma). Budina's debut feature AGON screened at over 30 festivals and was Albania's Oscar nomination in 2014. A SHELTER AMONG THE CLOUDS his second feature, premiered at Tallinn Black Nights Festival, winning awards in Cinequest (Us), PriFilmFest (Ko), Valetta (Mt), distributed in Germany & Austria. Budina created the mini tv series THE SQUARE OF POWER with 40% audience share on Albanian national TV, completed his third feature WATERDROP and is developing a new tv mini-series THE INVISIBLE SUCCESSOR.

- 2004 LULBORË/ SNOWDROP short film, writer director
- 2012 AGON / DAWN feature film, writer director
- 2018 STREHA MES REVE / A SHELTER AMONG THE CLOUDS feature film, writer director
- 2022 KATRORI I PUSHTEIT / THE SQUARE OF POWER mini tv series, writer director
- 2024 PIKË UJI / WATERDROP feature film, creator writer director
- 2024 PASUESI I PADUKSHËM / THE INVISIBLE SUCCESSOR mini tv series, creator writer director (development)

| CAST

WITH

GRESA PALLASKA (as Aida)
ARBEN BAJRAKTARAJ (as Ilir)
ADEM KARAGA (as Elvis)
GERHARD KOLONECI (as Ben)

AND

PAOLO IANCU (as Mark)
KLODJANA KECO (as Monda)
ASTRIT KABASHI (as Luan)
ANDREA PEPI (as Aida's father)
EDOARDO ROSSI (as Stefano)
AJSI ÇELA (as Ema)
ILDA PEPI (as Besa)
MIRJANA DETI (as Aida's mother)
ERJOLA META (as Judge)

CREW

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|---------------------|--|
| A film by | ROBERT BUDINA |
| Written by | ROBERT BUDINA DORUNTINA BASHA AJOLA DAJA |
| Produceed by | SABINA KODRA CARMEN RIZAC DANIELE SEGRE DANIELE DE CICCIO |
| Coproduced by | LUAN KRYEZIU SASHO PAVLOVSKI |
| Dop | MARIUS PANDURU R.S.C |
| Editor | ENRICO GIOVANNONE A.M.C |
| Production designer | LEANDËR LJARJA |
| Costume designer | EMIR GRAMO TURKESHI |
| Make up | SERENA GIOA |
| Hair | RETI MEHMETI |
| Composer | MARIUS LEFTARACHE |
| Sound Engeener | ROBERTO GAMBOTO REMORINO |
| Sound mix | MARIUS LEFTARACHE |
| Sound design | MIRKO GUERRA |
| Production | ERAFILM AVANPOST REDIBIS FILM |
| Coproduction | ILIRIA FILM MANUFAKTURA PRODUCTION |