

SOFA



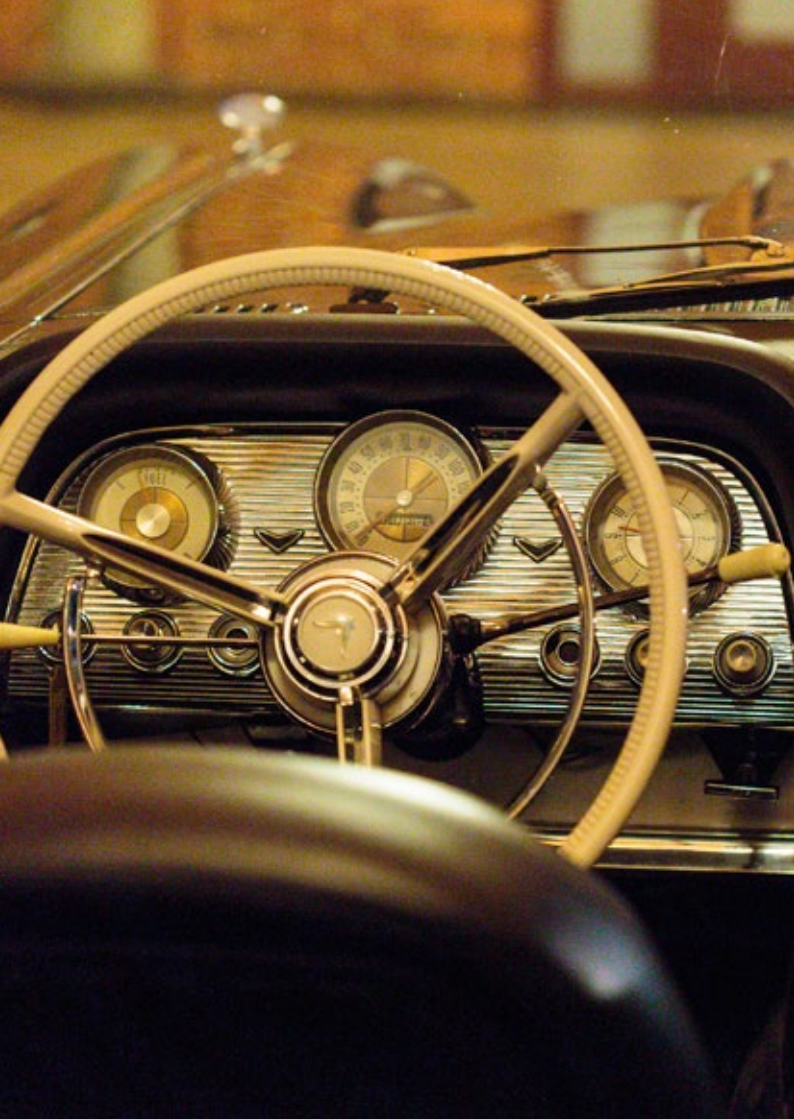
School of Film Agents



YEARBOOK

Class of 2015

AUGUST 21-30, 2015 WROCLAW | POLAND



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THIRD TIME MAKES IT A TRADITION!

There is an old German saying: if something happens three times in a row it becomes a tradition. So we are very happy, that after a third successful SOFA edition, we've become a tradition as the only school of film agents worldwide.

What was different/new this time? Surely a severe step forward was the fact, that we received over 100 applications from 25 countries, which is amazing, keeping our specific target group in mind. Responsible for this are not only all our social media activities and presentations throughout the year but especially the highly encouraging word of mouth and the network support of all our partners (among them the Polish Film Institute and the Goethe-Institut promotion in all our eligible countries). Another great news: the Goethe-Institut is offering an amazing added value of SOFA within the region of Central and Eastern Europe. Three of our alumni were able to enjoy a prolific German language course and did a creative internship at a German film company to deepen their professional experience.

A fantastic and faithful team of partners is behind SOFA – just to mention with deepest gratitude the City of Wrocław,

the Polish Film Institute, the German Federal Foreign Office, the International Visegrad Fund, the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation, the Film- und Medienstiftung NRW, the Goethe-Institut Head Office Munich as well as the local Goethe-Institutes of Belgrade, Bratislava, Bucharest, Kiev, Krakow, Moscow and Prague, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, the Wrocław Film Commission, the Film Commission Poland, the Serbian Ministry of Culture and Information and many, many more.

A great »Thank you« also goes out to our amazing counsellors and mentors, to our terrific team in Poland and Germany, that makes SOFA so special and successful, and last but in no way least – with a kind of magic – to our lovely eight participants. Their passion for their projects, their love towards their job, cinema and art, their wish to change and challenge the audio-visual sector in their country for a better future let us experience unforgettable moments in Wrocław. By now we are looking forward to the fourth SOFA edition. 2016 will be a very special year for SOFA indeed, when our hometown Wrocław will celebrate being the European Capital of Culture and host the European Film Awards. So besides all those activities, please join us again from August 19–28, 2016 at SOFA for our pan-European think tank for the future of cinema!

Don't sit on your couch: Join SOFA!

Nikolaj Nikitin, Founder & Director of SOFA



FILLING THE VOID – (RE-)BUILDING FILM CULTURE IN THE EAST

A REPORT
ON THE THIRD SOFA EDITION

► The seminar room at Zamek Topacz



How can you support young film enthusiasts in realizing their visions and dream projects – especially if their country supplies few or none of the structures that could help foster unusual ideas by creative people? This question was once again at the center of SOFA – School of Film Agents, a workshop initiative which was founded by Nikolaj Nikitin and took place for the third time in Wrocław, Poland from August 21–30, 2015. As a Berlinale delegate, Nikitin has been travelling Middle and Eastern Europe as well as the Caucasus and Central Asia for many years. *By now films from these countries successfully run at big festivals*, Nikitin states. *But there is still a lack of structures and institutions that could strengthen film as an art form and as a socio-cultural factor in these countries and support the necessary film brokers, festival organizers, distributors and cinema owners in their work.* It's exactly these film agents that SOFA targets – it is unique in Europe and provides an interdisciplinary and intercultural platform for young film industry professionals that don't fit into the usual training programmes (for writers, directors or producers) but are just as important to a healthy and profitable film culture and industry.

EIGHT OUT OF ONE HUNDRED

For this third edition of SOFA, eight young film agents were selected, out of more than 100 applicants from 25 different countries in Middle and Eastern Europe, Germany, and

(for the first time) Central Asia. Their innovative project ideas had the potential to have a sustainable and strengthening effect on the film culture and industry in their home countries. Among the selected participants were six strong women in Milica Božanić (Serbia), Dorina Oarga (Romania), Olha Reiter (Ukraine), Hella Rihl (Germany), Katarina Tomkova (Slovakia) and Małgorzata Tusk (Poland) while Sergey Chutkov (Tajikistan) and Michal Kračmer (Czech Republik) represented the first participants from Central Asia and the Czech Republik respectively. Unlike in previous years both the participants and the tutors could communicate already before the summit, so that both sides would be perfectly prepared and could focus even more effectively on the individual project development: *As organizers we have learned from the previous two editions and were able to improve the process even more this year. The high number of applications suggests that SOFA has by now established itself in the international film scene, thanks to word-of-mouth promotion, the support of the local Goethe-Institutes in the participating countries as well as other project partners and via our social media activities,* Nikitin concluded.

RENOWNED TUTORS FROM EUROPE'S FILM INDUSTRY

Three miles from the bustling city centre of Wrocław is Hotel Zamek Topacz, embedded in a large park with a lake,



► *The group fueled by Zamek Topacz' classic car museum*

seminar rooms and a classic car museum. Placed in this peaceful and at the same time almost cinematographic environment, SOFA participants had ten days to substantiate their submitted concepts and budgets and prepare the pitch for their projects.

They were accompanied and supported once again by renowned tutors from the European film industry, who in lectures and intensive one-on-one sessions provided both their years of experience as well as concrete help with each particular project. Tutors this year included Claudia Dillmann (German Film Institute, Frankfurt), Maciej Jakubczyk (New Horizons Association, Wrocław), Matthijs Wouter Knol (European Film Market, Berlin), Roberto Olla (Eurimages, Strasbourg), Katriel Schory (Israel Film

Fund, Tel Aviv), Riina Sildos (Baltic Event, Tallinn), Tamara Tatishvili (Ablabudafilm, Tbilisi) and Kristina Trapp (EAVE, Luxembourg). Beforehand, each and every one of them had been assigned as a mentor to one of the submitted projects most appropriate to his occupational skill set, so that a close exchange and profound contacts between the participants and mentors were guaranteed. The mentors are only chosen after the selection of our participants, so real tailor-made education is guaranteed. An additional lecture about marketing and consumer psychology was given by Domenico la Porta (Cineuropa, Brussels).

Besides said mentors four more experts have been part of the SOFA team from the very start, continually guiding the participants from the workshop's first to last day: Renaud Redien-Collot (Novancia Business School, Paris) helped them develop a marketing strategy individually tailored to their project in order to present their idea optimally to potential financiers or sponsors. To create a competent and self-confident presentation in front of an audience, they had the support of pitching specialist Sibylle Kurz (Frankfurt a.M.). Furthermore Oliver Baumgarten (Programme Manager Max Ophüls Preis, Saarbrücken) and Academy Award winner Ewa Puszczyńska (Opus Film, Lodz; *Ida*) helped the participants with honing their concept pitch papers both conceptually and stylistically in individual feedback sessions, and with working out an appropriate budget and realistic timetable for each project.



► Audience at the final project pitch

NETWORKING PANELS AT ZAMEK TOPACZ

Complementing these hours of intense work was a networking panel and two screenings at the Hotel Zamek Topacz. Furthermore, the SOFA participants and teachers were able to catch a special preview screening of the Swedish-Polish co-production *The Here After* at Poland's largest art-house cinema Nowe Horyzonty in Wrocław. After the film director Magnus von Horn and producer Mariusz Włodarski talked about their collaboration, the chances and challenges of European co-production and the realization of a debut feature which premiered at this year's Cannes Film Festival.

The networking panel consisted of European and Polish industry figureheads and SOFA partners. There was an especially strong focus on the German-Polish cultural exchange, which is traditionally strengthened by SOFA

and which in the past has inspired several German-Polish projects. Izabela Kiszka-Hoflik (Polish Film Institute), Kristina Trapp (EAVE), Rafał Bubnicki (Wrocław Film Commission), Domenico la Porta (Cineuropa), Mariusz Włodarski (producer *The Here After*), Cornelius Ochmann (Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation) and Dorota Krakowska (Goethe-Institut Krakow) were presenting their respective programmes and institutions and giving advice on the development and financing of film procurement projects. There the SOFA participants had the possibility to learn more about the many European training and support programmes and get substantiated feedback on their projects.

► *Izabela Kiszka-Hoflik and Rafał Bubnicki at the networking panel*



The two screening nights were dedicated to the participants' national film cultures. Every participant would introduce the milestones of his home country's film history in a very personal way. The clips shown ranked from the Ukrainian silent film *Bread* via Slovakian 60s movies like *The Sun in a Net* to more recent productions like Tajikistan's *Kosh ba Kosh* or Poland's *In the Name Of*, all of which provided a multitude of insights into the respective film cultures.

CHALLENGED BY STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS

These introductions and the following debate included discussions on the current working situations for filmmakers and film agents in these countries. It became apparent that in many of the participants' home countries an unstable political and economical situation as well as an under-developed film market, a lack of support and funding for independent creative people and general disinterest about art-house cinema and local filmmaking are among the most prevalent challenges encountered.

Many of those structural problems can be traced back to the collapse and system change of 1989 and the following and enduring political and economic crises preventing any form of boom in the film business: *The film industry of Tajikistan has suffered greatly since the USSR collapse followed by a lasting civil war and has not recovered until now*, says Sergey Chutkov from Tajikistan. The under-developed film industry is confronted with a multitude of political and

economical problems that make culture projects seem expendable: *Our Ministry of Culture tells us that we are in a war, that there is no money for culture, because we need to buy more weapons. That's why last year's slogan of our festival was »stronger than weapon«, because cinema is much stronger*, states Olha Reiter from Ukraine.

While the political and economical situation in other participants' home countries might not be as bleak as they are in Tajikistan or the Ukraine, creative culture workers struggle against the constant slashing of their budgets all over: *We have a lot of problems on the political level, everyone is fighting their own battle, therefore it is not easy to develop a cultural project. The budgets are cut every year*, Dorina Oarga from Romania explains. This is also why the home market of many countries is dominated by economically »safe« Hollywood movies and national mainstream productions that have little or nothing to say about the political or socio-cultural situation in said countries: *The domestic audience is poor in numbers and productions are generally dependent on scarce public funding. Film culture is struggling and the variety of cinematic works that are produced are limited to the same old stories*, reports Milica Božanić from Serbia.

BUILDING UP A REGIONAL BASE

Parallel to the uniformity of cultural production there is also a lack of access to their own cinematic heritage as

an expression of cultural identity and as an opportunity to understand their own history: *I was very young when the regime fell apart, I have few memories. I want to see what people believed, what their interests were. I try to understand a bit and make my own perception of these times*, says Dorina Oarga regarding her interest in the Romanian cinematic heritage.

All these challenges are considered in the projects that SOFA helped develop to maturity. A central concern of many of the ideas is strengthening the regional film culture and industry, enable ambitious productions that critically shine a light on social reality, and new access to their own film history: *From an innovative VoD approach to the cultural preservation of cinematic heritage to a transnational network-development-event for young filmmakers right up to the establishing of the first regional film funding body in Ukraine: the breadth and ingenuity of this year's project ideas impressively reflects the film-structural and cultural challenges we are attempting to address in these respective regions*, Nikitin says.

A FILM COMMISSION FOR LVIV

The aim of strengthening the regional film culture and industry unites most of the projects that were selected for and refined at SOFA. The Ukrainian participant Olha Reiter and her project Lviv Film Commission seek the establishment of the first ever regional film commission in

the Ukraine. Situated in one of the largest and oldest cities in Western Ukraine (which incidentally is also a partner city to Wrocław), the Lviv Film Commission was able to start its work at the beginning of August this year. As a contact point for filmmakers that want to shoot in Lviv or the surrounding area, it will in the future support filmmakers and their projects in all stages of development and provide transparent information about potential shooting sites and sets as well as about regional filmmakers, crews and service providers. In the intermediate-term future it's planned to be complemented by a regional film fund so that short and feature films by local filmmakers can be financed and thus their stories can be brought to a wider attention and reception: *Our region can bring new stories to Ukrainian cinema. We need to present Ukraine not only on one stream, but in many different ways.*

A SOCIAL PLATFORM FOR YOUNG FILMMAKERS IN DUSHANBE

Strengthening the regional infrastructure and granting young film buffs on the ground access to film production is also at the center of Sergey Chutkov's project »Dushanbe Documentary Film Centre«. After the system change of 1989 and a long-lasting civil war there still is no film industry and no institution for film education in Tajikistan. Neither is there hardly any possibility for a free exchange on the subject of politics or art: *Dushanbe is a small city*



► *Sergey Chutkov presenting his project*

where you can find rare places to come, to feel at home, to feel free. My motivation is to create such a place. As a social platform for young filmmakers, Sergey wants the Film Centre to provide space, equipment and training for the production of documentary films that, in interaction with the local population, grapple with the socio-cultural and economic conditions in the area.

PROFESSIONALIZING THE INDUSTRY IN SERBIA

The Serbian participant Milica Božanić also plans for a space for workshops, exchange and networking. Her project Criss-Cross Film Lab envisages the teaching of interdisciplinary abilities to young Serbian filmmakers, who face a rough start into their professional career: *Being a young filmmaker in Serbia is tough, because there is no infrastructure or organization helping them to do the*

transfer to the professional world. Besides communicating the artistic abilities and enabling the networking of young filmmakers with producers, the yearly Lab events shall teach the students mainly business skills and marketing strategies: This way many aspects of the filmmaking process could be strengthened to respond to real life challenges that any project encounters in development.

FILM EDUCATION TO POLAND'S PERIPHERY

The Polish participant Małgorzata Tusk on the other hand plans a mobile film education studio called Cinebus – Mobile Centre of Audivisual Education. It's intended to take the already established workshop series of the Film Spring Open initiative (headed by the Oscar-nominated director of photography Sławomir Idziak) to Poland's periphery – to places where usually only a select few have access to an audiovisual education: *I want to spread the initiative to different territories, to create more jobs for people in the creative industry.* Equipped with the latest technology the bus will give all participants the possibility to go through every stage of film production. It will become a one-stop learning spot that nobody else is providing in Poland – ranging from development, shooting and post-production to screenings. In the long run the Cinebus is supposed to not only work as a film education tool but also as a model for production for small projects by young filmmakers: *We would like to practically prove the Cinebus cost effective*



► *Małgorzata Tusk and Katarina Tomkova*

and time saving solutions not only for modern education but also for modern film production.

A CENTRAL EUROPEAN MATCHMAKING PLATFORM

Besides the focus on cultural and economic re-animation of domestic film culture and industry SOFA also helps to refine projects aimed at production and circulation of European co-productions in the international film markets. For example, Czech participant Michal Kračmer with his project Cuz We Are Talented tries to raise awareness for young talents from the countries of Central Europe (Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary and Slovenia) and foster co-productions between those regions. His focus is on young filmmakers standing between their film school thesis projects and the start of their professional careers: *The main goal is to help beginning filmmakers to make the step from student to professional world.* As a meeting point for young creative



people and experienced filmmakers, producers and distributors, Cuz We Are Talented will establish itself as a Central European matchmaking platform, where high-end projects with an international orientation can be presented: *The key characteristic of the selected projects is their international potential. It means that the project has a chance to reach a broader than domestic audience.*

INTERNATIONALIZING FILMS

To reach an audience beyond the domestic market is also the aim of Slovakian participant Katarina Tomkova and her project Kaleidoscope. As a service agency Kaleidoscope wants to provide strategies for internationalization from script stage all the way to distribution, helping filmmakers

► Cornelius Ochmann and Dorota Krakowska on the networking panel



to conquer international film markets along the way: *I see many young talents, but their priority is of course on the creation process. There is not much energy left to do the international planning. It's a pity to put so much energy into creating something and then just leave it on its own in the local environment, especially when the local attention toward these films is not very high.* The multi-faceted services offered include among others administration of applying to script workshops, co-production platforms, for Creative Europe, Eurimages and with international promotion and communication. *With this service I can push Slovak projects with an international potential onto a new level, helping them to reach an audience and attention they deserve and often won't be able to get in their local country.*

SECURING THE CINEMATIC HERITAGE

Two other SOFA projects dealt with new ways to access productions that are almost or completely forgotten or unavailable. The Romanian participant Dorina Oarga with her project Cinepub 2nd Life wants to digitize students' films from the archive of the National University of Theatre and Film »I.L.Caragiale« (UNATC) and make them available to everyone online – a pilot project for securing the recent cinematic heritage, that could be a model for other European countries as well. As one of Europe's oldest film schools, the UNATC houses the student films



of the most influential Romanian filmmakers, from Liviu Ciulei via Mircea Daneliuc right up to Cristian Mungiu: *The student films of these auteurs are a cultural stockpile of a fundamental importance. They capture the history, culture and identity of a whole European nation.* Since it is currently not available to the public, Dorina plans, in cooperation with UNATC, to bring this part of the Romanian film heritage back into the public consciousness one film after another: *The digitized films will be available online, for free, worldwide, to anyone with Internet connection.* As a living archive of the Romanian film history the platform, in the long run, is intended to also include other domestic classics beyond the film school archive.

FINDING AN AUDIENCE FOR AMBITIOUS CHILDREN'S FILMS

A new visibility is also what German SOFA participant Hella Rihl strives for with her project *möwe*. *ChildrensFilmDistribution*. Since ambitious domestic and international children's movies beyond Disney or Pixar eke out a marginal existence in Germany, Hella plans to strengthen them with the help of a specialized children's film distribution company. *We want to set up a distribution company for children's films, not just children's films which are the most promising ones when it comes to sales, but that are above average in terms of content, form and variety.* While these films on the one hand are supposed to



pass through the usual distribution chain of cinema, DVD, TV and video on demand, Hella also plans alternative screenings in schools, sport clubs and cafés to reach more viewers: *Besides regular distribution we can reach a wider audience with this underground distribution.*

FOR AN INDEPENDENT PLURALISTIC FILM CULTURE

As different as all the SOFA projects seem, the participants are united in their wish to create spaces for exchange and belonging and a pluralistic film culture independent from the reigning political and economic discourses: *All the cinematography of Ukraine is concentrated in one city, our capital. There are always the same stories, our region can bring something new, we also have many stories to tell,* says Ohla Reiter. *It is important to tell what happens in Tajikistan, to document it and to give another perspective on what the official discourse is doing,* adds Sergey Chutkov. The discussions also touched on the danger of producing normative blockbusters only instead of creatively risky projects due to the dependence on public grants and funds – a political exertion of influence that all participants are aware of and that must be challenged. Another topic was the future of cinema in the dawning age of video on demand services like Netflix, that necessitates a contemplation of alternative ways of distribution and screening contexts. There was a consensus at the

discussions that the films and their contents still should be at the center of a distribution strategy: *New ways should always contribute to the content*, says Matthijs Wouter Knol in regards to novel forms of distribution.

THE »CULTURAL EXCEPTION«

There were also discussions about the fight for film being a »cultural exception« in regards to the negotiations of the Transatlantic Free Trade Agreement with the United States. Roberto Olla stressed the significance of the exemption for cultural products like films, since they should not be treated as mere economic goods but should, as a medium of cultural identity and cultural values, be fostered by state protection and public funding. A ban of this funding as a consequence of the free trade agreement would result in massive damage for the diversity of the European film culture. For now cultural products may be exempt from the agreement in the talks with the US, but the danger is not yet completely averted.

In this context, the EU commission's actions towards abolishing the territorial rights splitting for online distribution was raised as a topic – it would mean that broadcasting and online screening licenses could only be sold once for all of Europe instead of multiple times split along regional borders. Thus not only would revenues drop (and budgets correspondingly), also the risk and cost of European co-productions could no longer be spread



► Roberto Olla's talk about the »cultural exception«

out among several partners. This would lead to an end of European co-production since at its very core always was the idea of dissemination of risk and pitching in higher joint budgets in order to assemble a film that can be competitive in the marketplace.

Whether in cinema, on a VoD platform or in a film bus – it is clear that films are more than just commercial products. They need a fixed place in our society both as documents of history and change as well as a means of expression. *When people watch films they observe heroes with whom they can associate with. It is important to have these insights, it can make you think, it inspires you, it can make you travel, it moves you to change something*, Olha Reiter states. Rebellious against normative uniformity, searching for new forms of film agency and distribution and communicating with the new providers of audiovisual content – these are

the challenges that young film agents have to face up to in the future. Says Nikitin: *We are witnessing a monumental change in media, and no one can see where the journey will end up. But I firmly believe that of course neither film as a medium nor the cinema as a place will ever die. They will just present themselves in new forms and disguises. This is why film agents are so fundamentally important for this future: They are the ones who have to explore these new paths and act out these scenarios, while filmmakers keep on producing new content. The challenges film agents have to face will keep on growing and funds and resources will grow ever scarcer, so I see more necessity for our SOFA workshops than ever before, in order to secure the future of cinema and film as an art form.* Izabela Kiszka-Hoflik displayed her confidence after reviewing this year's participants: *Seeing the projects I think that the future of cinema is in really good hands.*

VISIONS COMING TO LIFE

After ten intensive days the projects had gained immensely both in terms of precision and outline and in feasibility and aplomb thanks to detailed market analyses and pitching training: *SOFA showed me aspects of my project that I didn't think of, it gave me a thorough understanding and detailed analysis of every step that I should take. This was so far the best experience I had in my life on any kind of workshop. Everyone is so dedicated to what they do, there*

is not even one minute of wasted time. I don't know any other place where you can get this level of quality, Milica Božanić says enthusiastically. Hella Rihl was equally impressed by the quality and intensity of the workshops: *It's much better than I expected it, we have this really intense working atmosphere, we are working non-stop on the projects. Even if it's not about our project, we can take a lot of things that were discussed and adjust them and bring them together with our own project.* The teachers, too, were convinced of the progress the projects have made: *Thanks to the input of all mentors the projects really took shape during the workshop,* says Kristina Trapp. Another source for enthusiasm for the SOFA participants

► Maciej Jakubczyk working with Olha Reiter



was the personal supervision by key players in the European film industry: *There are some places like Cannes where it is impossible to speak to some people. Nicki invited some mentors that are really inaccessible, like Roberto Olla, Sibylle Kurz and Ewa Puszczynska, says Małgorzata Tusk. Talking to my mentor Roberto Olla was very inspiring, he knows the environment and legal and economical aspects of the film industry very well and I hope we will be able to cooperate in the future,* Katarina Tomkova added. Sergey Chutkov, too, was exalted by the cooperation with his mentor Matthijs Wouter Knol: *He was very open, very supportive and ready to help me.*

INTER-CULTURAL EXCHANGE

The tutors and teachers, on the other side, were equally happy with the exchange provided by the participants: *I'm learning a lot from the participants. It is a win-win situation, we as tutors share our knowledge, but we can also grab from their enthusiasm and their knowledge, it is a beautiful dialogue between generations and various parts of film cultures,* says Ewa Puszczynska. *I was really impressed and challenged by the commitment and by the sense of mission that all the participants demonstrated with their projects, trying to elevate and contribute to the film industry and community in their own countries,* adds Katriel Schory. The interdisciplinary and inter-cultural exchange of ideas and experiences was perceived to be of

great value even beyond the confines of project development: *It's good that we are all here in the same place as we talk a lot, not only about the film industry, but we try to understand the situation in the different countries. To know more about those countries is really cool,* says Dorina Oarga. *You can share ideas and compare experiences, you get what happens in each region and it really opens our minds,* Michal Kračmer agrees.

The exchange and acknowledgment could also strengthen the participants' resolve to fight for the film culture and industry in their home countries: *The most important message here at SOFA is that there is no way of being scared. We are always scared that we will fail, that it's not going to happen, that we will not be convincing. But that's not the way to do it,* says Olha Reiter. *I think what SOFA has created is a rather unique ecoclimate for young professionals to embrace their ideas, to test them with already established players of the industry and what they can't really take away is the awareness that they are not alone and with the right effort they can be part of a bigger cinema family,* adds Tamara Tatishvili.

This badly needed strengthening of and networking in film culture and industry in each of the participants' home countries is and remains the main objective of the SOFA initiative and its dedicated participants: *After seeing and understanding more and more, what kind of support our film agents need in order to succeed in the future,*



the aim and objective of SOFA gets clearer from year to year. We try to provide a programme that's tailor-made for our participants. All this is only possible because of the generous support of all our partners and the experts' willingness to invest some of their valuable time in SOFA, says Nikitin.

FBO – A SUCCESS STORY

A look at the last two years of SOFA reveals, that this pan-European think tank for the future of cinema already had a great impact and already bore a lot of fruit. A majority of the project ideas from recent years could successfully be realized or are close to implementation. The Eurimage-sponsored Serbian SOFA project FBO – Festival Box Office by Sonja Topalović has launched its beta phase this February at the Berlinale. In the spring a presentation of the interactive online database for film festivals was shown at Cannes and later on FBO had also an important promotion within the San Sebastian Film Festival. By now FBO is cooperating closely with the Film Center Serbia, evaluating the presence, audience numbers and ticket count for films at Serbian film festivals. Furthermore there are ongoing talks with several international film festivals to feed the database little by little with further information. As an innovative business tool FBO will in the long run measure the success of films on festivals world-wide, helping the key players of the industry understand the audience's preferences.



ADDED VALUE FOR ALUMNI

Leana Jalukse's project Doktok – a distribution initiative for Estonian documentary films – has, with the help of SOFA, been implemented, too. Leana also successfully completed a six-week German language course in Munich and a creative internship at the international distribution company Beta Cinema, whose Executive Vice President Thorsten Ritter was a mentor in SOFA's first edition. This combination of language course and internship is the result of SOFA's cooperation with the Goethe-Institut Prague, which since 2014 supports SOFA participants from Middle and Eastern European countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Slovenia) by having the Goethe-Institut offered a language course in Germany for them. They furthermore get the chance to complete an internship with a SOFA-connected company or one of the mentors, where they can gain valuable practical experience for the realization of their project. Beside Leana the Polish SOFA alumna Anna Bielak and Hungarian SOFA participant Gábor Böszörményi took the language course and established business contacts in Germany.

MORE SUCCESS STORIES

The Romanian SOFA project Transilvania Film Fund by Cristian Hordila is about to get implemented, and the Lithuanian SOFA project FRONT – Film Republic

of Networked Theatres by Kestutis Drazdauskas is making significant progress on its plans to digitize the cultural centers in Lithuania: First contracts with local administrations have been signed, now the private sector is being included in the financing of this ambitious project. Together with his mentor Fatima Djoumer (Europe Cinemas), who will visit him in fall 2015 in Lithuania, Kestutis will talk about further financing options. Greek SOFA participant Angeliki Vergou was able to win over the Goethe-Institut Athens as a supporter for her VoD platform Octopus and is currently in the process of making contracts with Festival Scope about the site's hosting.

Meanwhile, the SOFA project Interaktiv Cinema of the Hungarian participant Gábor Böszörményi has undergone some changes. Instead of an interactive website that allows the audience to programme their favorite films in local art house theaters, Gábor will now focus on towns that don't have a traditional cinema, where films in HD quality will be shown at alternative locations such as cultural centers, libraries and schools. Several Hungarian distributors have expressed great interest in this alternative screening network, and first screenings are planned for this coming winter.



IMPACT FOR NEW PATHS

For some SOFA participants their workshop may not have lead to a successful implementation of their project, but they were able to make new contacts, gain experience and enjoy a thorough coaching by the SOFA mentors and thus could establish themselves in other branches of the film industry. Like the Polish participant Jan Naszewski who was able to successfully extend his company New Europe Film Sales in the last two years and, among other achievements, won one of the major awards at the prestigious Un Certain Regard section at the Cannes film festival for *Rams*, which was also the most-sold film in Cannes this year.

► *Nikolaj Nikitin: Apply for the fourth edition of SOFA!*



Polish SOFA participant Anna Bielak on the other hand found out during the workshop that she really wanted to be more involved in the creative side of filmmaking, and besides her work as a film critic (she was nominated as best critic this year by the Polish Film Institute) she is now also a successful script consultant.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The next big reunion, where all the SOFA alumni can exchange ideas and experiences regarding the current state of their projects, is scheduled for the Berlinale 2016. In addition, this year's projects are being monitored in the coming months by the SOFA team, meaning that mentors and teachers are still available with their know-how and their contacts to the participants and the participants can keep on working on bringing their projects to life. Wrocław will be European Capital of Culture in 2016 and will once again host the SOFA summit, which is scheduled for August 19–28. Taking advantage of the Capital of Culture programmes and festivities it is planned to invite former SOFA projects that were successfully implemented to Wrocław in order to introduce them to the audience and the industry.

The application process for the fourth edition of SOFA has already begun, and new projects can be submitted to nikolaj@joinsofa.org.



MILICA BOŽANIĆ
Criss-Cross Film Lab

SERBIA



OPERATIONS MANAGER AT THE SERBIA FILM COMMISSION,
FORMER FILM SECTOR SPECIALIST AT
USAID COMPETITIVENESS PROJECT SERBIA,
INCLUDING DEVELOPMENT OF WEBSITE AND BRAND »FILM IN SERBIA«

»Criss-Cross Film Lab« is a lab for the new generation of Serbian filmmakers. It will support home-grown filmmaking with focus on exploring local stories with universal appeal. The lab will train young filmmakers to pitch like TED speakers, be aware of their audience and film marketing strategies, engage with a wider community of creatives, deploy online skills and lateral thinking to advance storytelling and the development phase of projects to successfully bring a story to the screen and ensure that the audience will be there. The goal of the project is to set a foundation for the establishment of an annual pitching forum for film projects in development and producers/investors that will serve as a platform for a competitive and professional film event. ◀



SERGEY CHUTKOV
Dushanbe Documentary Film Centre

TAJIKISTAN



ART MANAGER, ARTIST AND JOURNALIST,
INITIATOR OF DUSHANBE INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL, NIGHT OF
MUSEUMS IN TAJIKISTAN; PARTICIPANT OF CENTRAL PAVILION OF
INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2013

The Dushanbe Documentary Film Centre's ultimate goal is to create a nation-wide community of emerging documentary filmmakers based on the interaction with local communities that are willing to rethink or document the local socio-cultural and economic environment and reflect on the political agenda. The aim will be achieved through a set of activities including educational, technical and financial support of artistic projects, the foundation of a nation-wide event (documentary film festival) and the establishment of documentary film laboratories in the rural regions. The core of the activities is the creation of a film center in the capital of Tajikistan as the flagship of the project and its follow-up activities. The project also includes a regional ambition aiming to become a hub for film activists in Central Asia. ◀



MICHAL KRAČMER
Cuz We Are Talented

CZECH REPUBLIC

FILM PRODUCER, FAMU ALUMNUS,
CEO OF PRODUCTION COMPANY CINÉDIX,
WON »PROMISING PRODUCER« AWARD AT BALTIC EVENT 2014
AND »PROMOTIONAL PRIZE« BY GWFF AT IFF COTTBUS 2014

Cuz We Are Talented is an international co-production platform and training focused on feature fiction debut (or second time) movies of a director / writer / producer from the region of Central Europe (Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary and Slovenia).

The main goal is to help beginning filmmakers to make the step from student to professional world. The platform's goal isn't just to help with the projects' financing, but mainly with the distribution part – on both the domestic and international market. Cuz We Are Talented will work as an international co-production forum, but also as a meeting point when searching for national partners. ◀



DORINA OARGA
CINEPUB 2nd Life

ROMANIA



PROJECT MANAGER OF CINEPUB (ONLINE PLATFORM OF ROMANIAN FILMS),
ROMANIAN REPRESENTATIVE OF EVENTIVAL,
TEAM MEMBER AT TRANSYLVANIA IFF, VILNIUS IFF AND DOHA TRIBECA FF

25 years after the fall of communism, the Romanian cultural heritage still needs support in order to synchronize with the European contemporary context. With CINEPUB 2nd Life, CINEPUB is launching a daring project, the digitization of the Romanian Film Heritage, starting with its originating point, the Romanian National Film School Archives. CINEPUB is the first online free-of-charge, weekly updated content platform dedicated to the Romanian cinema. Launched in the beginning of 2015 by GAV (the Romanian Cultural Marketing Agency pioneer) through a contract-based Google partnership, CINEPUB aims to bring films of well known directors as well as independent productions made by passionate people at the beginning of their careers to contemporary local and international audiences. ◀



OLHA REITER
Lviv Film Commission

UKRAINE



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF LVIV FILM COMMISSION,
CO-FOUNDER AND CEO OF WIZART,
CO-FOUNDER OF LVIV INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, WIZART
FILM SCHOOL AND LVIV FILM MEETINGS

At the beginning Lviv Film Commission will finance short films and documentaries with a focus on developing local filmmakers' potential, with the perspective to co-finance 2–3 feature and a bunch of short films per year. Having support of Lviv City Administration and being the first case of creating an official Film Commission this can be a good example for other cities and regions of Ukraine. Establishing a Film Commission and later on also a Film Fund will be very helpful in terms of developing the local film industry as well as economy. Over 1,000 such organizations are active in over 100 countries around the world. First tasks of LFC are to create a location guide and to develop a network of local film professionals. ◀



HELLA RIHL
möwe. ChildrensFilmDistribution

GERMANY



PROGRAMME COORDINATOR AT BERLINALE TALENTS,
FORMER FESTIVAL COORDINATOR AT GERMAN FILM AND TELEVISION ACADEMY
BERLIN, FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE CHILDREN'S FILM SECTION AT THE INT'L
STUDENTS FILM FESTIVAL SEHSÜCHTE

Germany's first distribution company solely for children's films focusses on national and international productions of all genres, formats and contents for children aged between 4 and 14 years. Our goal is to establish a label for sophisticated films for children, to create awareness in terms of art and culture and to become a strong partner for both sides: the film acquisition and the consumers. Parents intuitively need to know that they can trust in our films. To achieve this, children and young adults need to be taken seriously in their needs and demands and especially in their role as an audience. For this purpose, we aim to provide strong content and are going to offer exciting cinematic alternatives in order to show how much we believe in a childhood audience and its significance for the film industry. ◀



KATARINA TOMKOVA

kaleidoscope

SLOVAKIA



FLM PROMOTER AT THE FOREIGN DEPARTMENT OF
THE SLOVAK FILM INSTITUTE, FORMER PRODUCTION ASSISTANT AT ALEF
FILM&MEDIA GROUP, FILM CRITIC AND SCRIPT WRITER

kaleidoscope is a company providing the service of an international consultancy and representation for Visegrad producers that are primarily focusing on their creative occupation or the domestic issues and activities of film production. It will cover all stages of a feature film project planned for theatrical distribution, helping it enter the international film industry environment. Its main focus is to bring Visegrad-produced film projects to a transnational level, by identifying the key elements with an international potential and taking them to a professional audience, while making sure they reach the whole scope of their possibilities. The service consists of packaging of a film project, administration processes, strategies for international promotion and access to international networks. ◀



MALGORZATA TUSK
*Cinebus – Mobile Centre of Audiovisual
Education*

POLAND



PROJECT MANAGER OF FILM SPRING OPEN,
EMERGING FILM PRODUCER,
LAW GRADUATE

Cinebus is a mobile film studio that will offer tailor-made workshops for the audio-visual industry, from first-time filmmakers to young professionals in various creative fields. It will become a one-stop learning spot that nobody else is providing in Poland – ranging from development, shooting and post-production to screenings. Cinebus is an initiative by Film Spring Open, a Polish NGO, owned and managed by Sławomir Idziak (Oscar nominated cinematographer with 45 years of experience as a filmmaker and also a lecturer/educator). It is an initiative that developed and proved a methodology of »learning by doing«. Since 2005 we create a place where participants make films and at the same time test hands-on the newest equipment every year. Film Spring Open was awarded the PISF award in 2015. ◀

EWA PUSZCZYŃSKA

POLAND

Ewa Puszczyńska graduated from the English Literature Department at the University of Lodz. Since 1995, she has been working for Opus Film in Poland, an independent film production company. For the last 15 years she was managing various projects including their development and execution. She is a Member of EFA – European Film Academy and tutor at Lodz Film School. Her very recent credits include the well-acclaimed feature film *Congress*, written and directed by Ari Folman, and *Ida* directed by Paweł Pawlikowski, awarded with the Oscar and several European Film Awards.



SIBYLLE KURZ

GERMANY

Sibylle has working experience in the music and event business as well as in film licensing, acquisition and distribution. She has an academic background in media and communication science, sociology and psychology and a postgraduate education in in therapeutical coaching and focused communication. Since 1994, she freelances as a communication trainer for the arts & culture industries with special expertise in pitching. Since 20 years Sibylle teaches at acclaimed national and international film schools. She is a constant member of the EAVE-pedagogical team.





RENAUD REDIEN-COLLOT

FRANCE

Renaud is a professor of entrepreneurship and social innovation as well as Director of International Affairs at Nuvancia Business School. A former consultant in marketing strategies for South American start-ups, he was appointed by Rothschild Asset Management, New York, and has run a major UN Mediterranean project welcoming 600 female entrepreneurs. After his PhD studies at Columbia University, he launched a Master's Programme in entrepreneurship. Renaud has published several papers in peer-reviewed journals addressing gender and minority studies.



OLIVER BAUMGARTEN

GERMANY

Oliver is a film publicist, lecturer and film curator. The former editor-in-chief of the independent German film magazine Schnitt has conceived the Berlinale Talents workshop Talent Press and is conducting it until today. Since 2001, he is the co-initiator and co-host of Filmplus, a four-day festival about film editing and montage-art in Cologne which is unique throughout Europe. In 2014, he became the programme manager of the Max Ophüls Preis in Saarbrücken, Germany's most prolific film festival for young German-speaking cinema.





CLAUDIA DILLMANN

GERMANY

Director of the German Film Museum and German Film Institute (DIF) in Frankfurt, Claudia Dillmann also founded goEast Film Festival (which she headed for three years) and acts as counsel to the film section at the German cultural ministry. Claudia is heavily engaged in pushing forward film digitization projects on a national and European level.



MACIEJ JAKUBCZYK

POLAND

Head of education department at the New Horizons Association which organizes a nation-wide film education project, a Kids Film Festival and a children's film distribution. He is an expert for the Polish Film Institute and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage and a lecturer at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities.



MATTHIJS WOUTER KNOL

GERMANY

Matthijs is the director of Berlinale's European Film Market. Having started in the Netherlands as an associate producer of various documentary films at Pieter van Huystee Film until 2007, he changed to the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) and was programme manager of Berlinale Talents for more than six years.



ROBERTO OLLA

FRANCE

Roberto is the executive director of Eurimages, the European film fund based in Strasbourg. Trained as a lawyer, he specialised in film production. Before this, he was a researcher at the university and worked at the MEDIA Programme. He also participates as an expert in several European training initiatives in the film sector.



DOMENICO LA PORTA

BELGIUM

The international consultant in crowdfunding, social media, community building and cross-media strategies is editor-in-chief of CIN-EUROPA, co-host of the movie talk show »Cine Station« on Belgium's national TV channel RTBF, and founder and managing director of the stealth company KWEB.



KATRIEL SCHORY

ISRAEL

Former Head of Production of Kastel Films, Jerusalem, Katriel formed his own company Belfilms Ltd. in 1984 and produced over 200 films. He became Executive Director of the Israel Film Fund to support and promote Israeli feature films. In this position he supported the production of more than 190 new Israeli feature films.



RIINA SILDOS

ESTONIA

A former film critic and head of the Estonian Film Foundation, Riina Sildos set up her own production company Amrion Production in 2003, producing high quality feature films and documentaries for local and international cinema and TV markets. She is also the founder of Baltic Event and B'EST training programme, member of EAVE, ACE and EFA.



TAMARA TATISHVILI

GEORGIA

Tamara was director of the Georgian National Film Center from 2010–2013. Since 2011 she has been the Georgian representative to Eurimages, and Georgian representative in European Film Promotion. Since 2014 she also acts as freelance producer developing films with regional talents and incubating other film related activities.

KRISTINA TRAPP

GERMANY



Kristina has joined EAVE in 2004 and became its CEO in 2009. Before that, she has worked in the international film industry since 1999 – amongst others at the German regional film fund MFG-Filmförderung Baden-Württemberg, as a freelance producer for ARTE, heading the Film Commission Strasbourg and with the European training programme Masterclass Ludwigsburg/Paris.



SIDE BARS

SOFA OFFERED TWO PUBLIC EVENTS



THURSDAY, AUGUST 27

► 8–10pm @ Kino Nowe Horyzonty

Screening »The Here After«

Film talk with director Magnus von Horn and producer Mariusz Włodarski, moderated by Nikolaj Nikitin

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29

► 11–12:30am @ Zamek Topacz

Networking Panel

Public talk with Rafał Bubnicki, Izabela Kiszka-Hoflik, Dorota Krakowska, Domenico la Porta, Cornelius Ochmann, Katriel Schory, Mariusz Włodarski, moderated by Nikolaj Nikitin

THANKS

SOFA EXPRESSES ITS UTMOST GRATITUDE TO ALL SUPPORTERS, FRIENDS AND PARTNERS:

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IMPRINT

SOFA—School of Film Agents
founder and director ▶ Nikolaj Nikitin

production & organisation
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Bochum; www.oktober.de

SOFA

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