

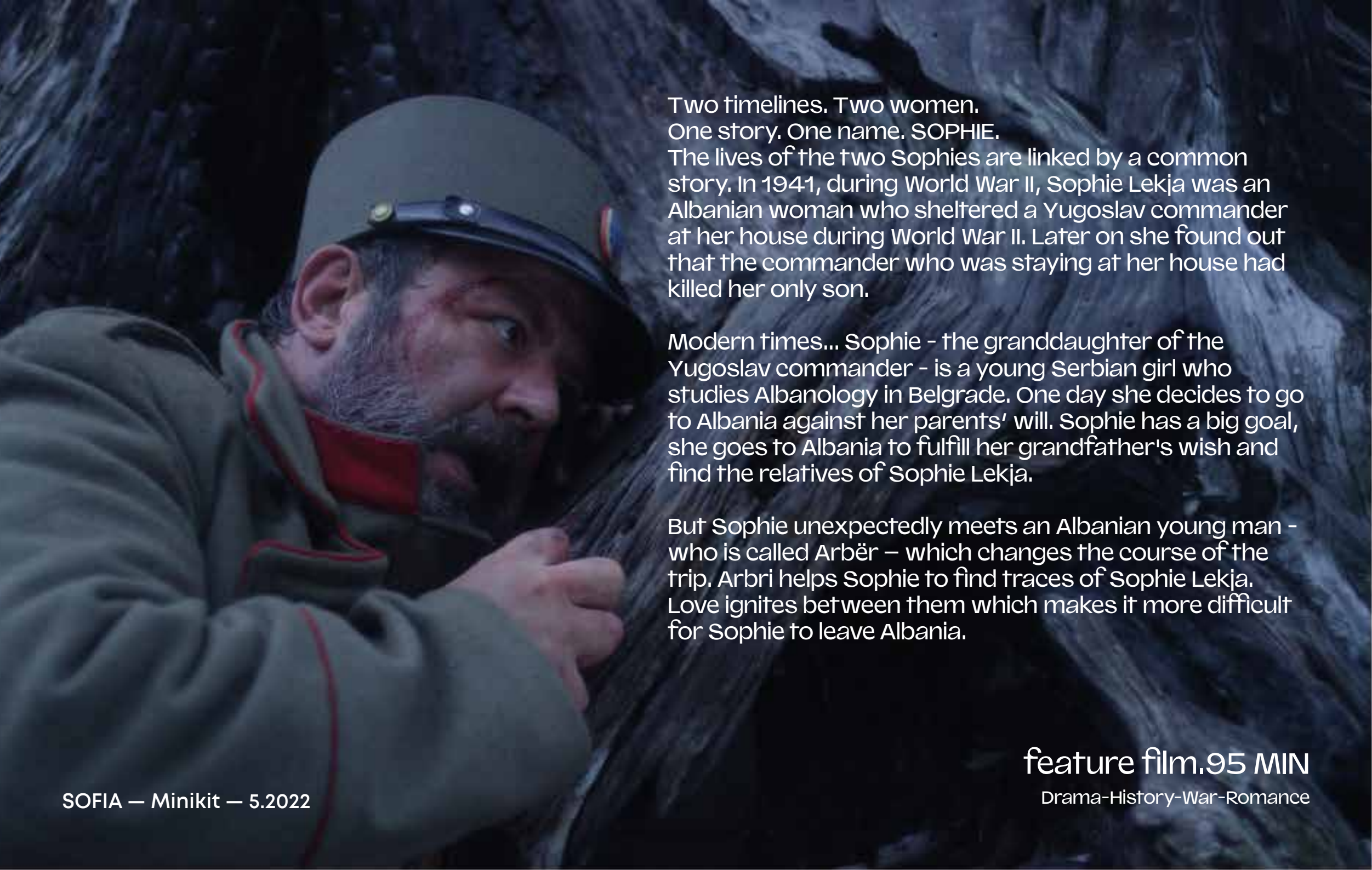
RITA GJEKA TINKA KURTI ALFRED TREBICKA ÇUN LAJÇI ROZAFI ÇELAJ ADEM KARAGA ANTONIO KODRINAJ

A FILM BY EDUART GRISHAJ

SOPHIA

BASED ON TRUE STORIES

DIRECTED BY **EDUART GRISHAJ**, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **ĐORĐE STOJILJKOVIĆ**, COMPOSER **ALBAN LARO**, MUSIC BY **SHPETIM SARAÇI**,
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER **TAN KAZAZI**, SCREENPLAY BY **EDUART GRISHAJ / FATMIRA NIKOLLI / ZEFINA HASANI**, GAFFER **ZORAN PEČENKOVIĆ**,
PRODUCTION DESIGNER **DESANTILA LIKA**, SOUND RECORDIST **GORAN BELOVIĆ BELKA / GENTI ISUFAJ / ALTIN MARA**,
SOUND POSTPRODUCTION **LABINOT SPONCA**, PRODUCTION ASSISTANT **MILENA BERAN** **NOVEMBER 03 2022**



Two timelines. Two women.
One story. One name. SOPHIE.
The lives of the two Sophies are linked by a common story. In 1941, during World War II, Sophie Lekja was an Albanian woman who sheltered a Yugoslav commander at her house during World War II. Later on she found out that the commander who was staying at her house had killed her only son.

Modern times... Sophie - the granddaughter of the Yugoslav commander - is a young Serbian girl who studies Albanology in Belgrade. One day she decides to go to Albania against her parents' will. Sophie has a big goal, she goes to Albania to fulfill her grandfather's wish and find the relatives of Sophie Lekja.

But Sophie unexpectedly meets an Albanian young man - who is called Arbër - which changes the course of the trip. Arbri helps Sophie to find traces of Sophie Lekja. Love ignites between them which makes it more difficult for Sophie to leave Albania.



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EDUART GRISHAJ Screenwriter / film director

Eduart Grishaj (Born in 1989) is a highly motivated narrative filmmaker with a degree in Filmmaking and Television and with more than 12 years of visual storytelling experience in filming, directing, editing and producing video content. With the camera being his greatest passion since childhood, he has deepened his knowledge of all stages of the filmmaking process. He first entered the international film competitions with the short film "The Grandmother", and went on to write and direct his first feature film "Sophia". Eduart is also a confident communicator and collaborator with the ability to maintain strong and effective work relationships, and the drive to achieve key individual and team goals.

TELEVISION DIRECTOR, TOP CHANNEL

Directed some of the most popular TV programs such as:

-Dua të të bëj të lumtur (I want to make you happy)

-Shqipëria ime (My Albania)

-Big Brother

-Big Brother VIP Albania

-Film Dokumentar - 14 Vitet e Para - Top Channel (Documentary – The First 14 Years – Top Channel), etc.

2019 FILM DIRECTOR & SCREENWRITER
THE GRANDMOTHER (Short film)

2022 FILM DIRECTOR & SCREENWRITER
SOPHIA (Feature Film)



Arbana Osmani "Seven Productions"

TV host and author of shows with best audience scores during Prime Time such as "Big Brother Albania", "E diell", "Dua të të bëj të lumtur".

Book author of "Receta për njerëzit që dua"

Book author of "Receta për 5 minuta"

Producer of "Shqipëria e munguar në festivalin e Filmit në Kanë" documentary / 2012.

Funder of "Mos i vrisni vajzat" digital movement, regarding women in Albania 2013.

2019 Producer of short film "Gjyshja/Grandmother" short film

2022 Producer of the feature film "Sophia"

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"Synopsis"

World War II, Northern Albania, Highlands. An elderly woman opens the doors of her house for a wounded Yugoslav commander returning from combat. This generous woman provides shelter and food to the stranger who knocks on her door to ask for help. She later discovers that her only son had lost his life in war and the killer is the commander that she sheltered in her house.

Sophie is faced with the dilemma between keeping "besa" and grieving the death of her son.

At the beginning of April 1941, during the World War II, the Yugoslav army managed to enter the north of Albania. While preparing to invade the city of Shkodra, they learned that Belgrade had fallen in the hands of the German Nazis. Some of them thought about retreating to their homeland passing through the Highlands. But the northern highlanders did not trust them. To them, a defeated army could behave worse than a victorious one, thus the serbians were ambushed. War broke out between the

highlanders and the Yugoslavs. The one who led the Yugoslav vanguard appeared to be the most dangerous among them.

The wounded Yugoslav commander manages to get away and approaches Sophie's house that was hidden in the mountains in order to ask for help.

Sophie, the woman with the headscarf, gives shelter to the stranger who speaks an incomprehensible language as a person that strongly believes in applying the tradition of hospitality and besa for the traveler in need. After giving him shelter and food, and covering the wound with her son's clothes, the stranger falls asleep.

Two other men of the family approach Sophie's yard and break the news to her that her son was killed while fighting against the Yugoslavs in order to protect the Albanian lands. Sophie discovers that the person who killed her son was the commander that she had sheltered.

The woman is faced with a great dilemma between offering hospitality to the stranger and holding him accountable for the murder of her son. She has to decide whether the enemy who is protected by the besa of mother Sophie can stay alive in her house.

Albania in the modern days. Sophie, the granddaughter of the Yugoslav commander studies Albanology in Belgrade. One day she decides to go to Albania against her parents' will. Sophie's goal is to fulfill her grandfather's wish, to find the relatives of Sophie Lekja. But Sophie unexpectedly meets an Albanian young man - who is called Arbër - which changes the course of the trip. Arbri helps Sophie to find traces of Sophie Lekja. During this journey, love ignites between them which makes it more difficult for Sophie to leave Albania.

Director's Note

Eduart Grishaj

Our childhood marks in many ways what we become when we grow up. Having said that, the set of rules on which we build our lives, not only as form of protection but also as a lifestyle, shapes our consciousness. Along with many of the controversial traditions labeled as old-fashioned, we have also lost many of the human values that were intertwined with them. The blood feud - considered as a highly exotic social wound by the West - has often prevailed over those inalienable values that have always characterized us, such as besa and hospitality.

During the stagnation of World War II, in a story that takes place in a patriarchal society where according to Canun, women did not enjoy the same rights and wealth as men, the character of Sophie symbolizes the essential role of old women in the highlands, where often their decision prevails over the law, even when it comes to welcoming

the enemy at home, to giving and keeping the word. Besa and hospitality represent the antithesis of blood feuds.

In the midst of moving away from traditions, towards a chaos that is regulated by cold laws, the story of the noble woman Sophie Lekja is a true one that took place in the North of Albania and was narrated in an account by Father Zef Pllumi. It represents a precious, old and expensive ornament of the Albanian women and mothers who tried and often managed to maintain balance in turbulent times. It remains the best illustration of the Albanian besa and traditions, which actually need to be brought back to people's attention. Through consciousness and gestures, Sophie restores faith in besa and the belief that men as human beings can and should be more trustworthy than contracts and decisions.

In the film this whole story is intertwined with modern-day events that are narrated by Sophie - a young Serbian girl - who reads this narrative from an old diary that she has received from her grandfather. Along with this story, the film will cover many events that have recently occurred between two neighboring countries, Albania and Serbia - which are united and divided by many things.

This film will demonstrate to the audience that more often than not the peoples of both countries prejudice each other without actually knowing each other very well, but only by judging through the lens of the past and divisive politics

Director's Note

Filming locations



Belgrade



Tirana



Albanian Alps



Skanderbeg Square



Qafa e Thores



Theth

Secuence Frame
Sophia Film Frame









SOFIA — Minikit — 5.2022







Tinka Kurti

Grandmother

Tinka was born in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (then part of Yugoslavia) to an Albanian father and Hungarian mother. She was the oldest of four children. At a young age her family returned to the city of Shkodra in the northern part of Albania. It is in Shkodra where she would spend most of her life and join the theatre at a young age.

In 1947 she was expelled from the Liceu Artistik (School of Arts) in Tirana and was never able to graduate. However, this did not stop her from pursuing her acting career. She made her first theatre

appearance at the age of 16, a minor role, in the play Dasma Shkodrane (Wedding from Shkodra.). From 1949 she became a member of the Theatre Migjeni in Shkodra where she was part of over 120 plays (dramas and comedies). Such plays include "Gjaku i Arbrit", "Histori Irkutase", "Toka Jonë", "Fisheku në pajë" and "Fejesa e Çehovit".

Kurti did not limit herself only to theatre and decided to try film too. In 1958, she was chosen as the leading female role in the first Albanian feature film "Tana". What followed was an endless series of film roles that would rightfully make her name a treasure of Albanian art. Some include Mother Pashako in "Yjet e netëve të gjata", the Mother in "Çifti i lumtur", Sinjorina Mançini in "Vajzat me kordele të kuqe", the Grandmother in "Zemra e Nënës". Many other roles will follow her long career in cinematography.

Two cinemas in Tirana and Durrës are named after her. The same is the school of Lekbibaj (a village of Albania). Kurti continues her acting career. She once said: "I don't fear the old age, not even death. But, I do fear the senility of the brain, and when that moment comes, I think I will be dead twice. That's why I want to continue to work.

SOFIA — Minikit — 5.2022



Rita Gjeka

Sofie Lekja

Rita Gjeka was born in Shkodra on May 22, 1960. She graduated "Jordan Misja" high school in 1979. She completed her studies at the Academy of Fine Arts where she graduated in 1985. She has played several roles in theater and films. She is currently the director of the "Migjeni" theater in Shkodra.



Rozafa Çelaj

Sophie

Born in Kosovo, Rozafa Celaj is an actress and director. Celaj graduated from the Faculty of Arts at the Prishtina University, department of TV and Film Directing. She attended professional music school, where she played violin and sang. At a young age, she appeared in

"Blodsband" (2007) by Marius Holst. She is best known for the feature film "Aga's House"(2019) premiered on Karlovy Vary Film Festival. Rozafa's performance in Aga's House got a wide attention of the media and art critiques, following her 5 nominations and 3 international awards for best actress. Moreover, she starred in "Looking for Venera" (2021), "Fence" (2018), which were presented in reputable festivals like The International Film Festival Rotterdam, The Palm Springs International Festival of Short Films. Rozafa played in a major production of HBO Europe and Paradox, featuring in a full season of "Welcome to Utmark", a series directed by Dagur Kari, which premiered in 2021.



Ilire Vinca

Vesnka

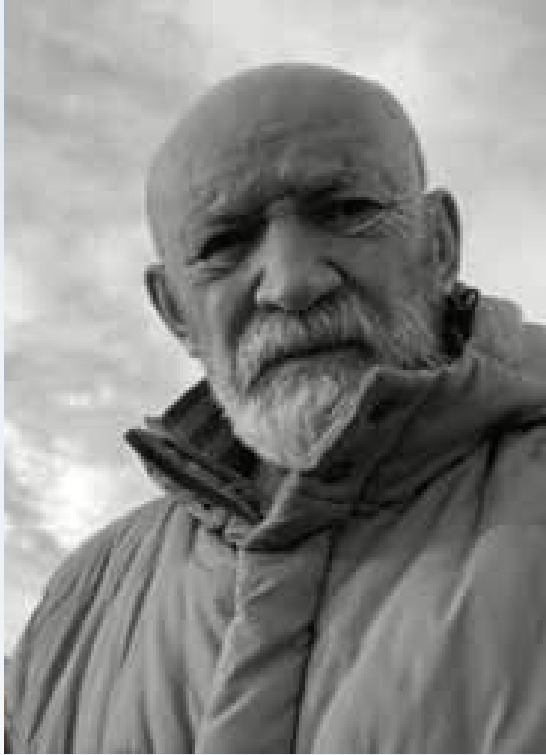
Ilire Vinca Celaj is an actress and casting director, known for Zana (2019), Lost Exile (2016) and The Marriage (2017).



Bajrush Mjaku

Grandfather

Bajrush Mjaku is an actor, known for Volebnoto samarce (1975), Mirage (2004) and Odmazda (2001).



Çun Laiçi

Martini

Çun Laiçi, or Çun Dreli, is an Albanian musician, author, theater actor, film actor, drama teacher and activist. He is famous for reciting poems to girls The Highland Lute (Lahuta e Malsisë). He is also a lahuta player.

Laiçi has played over 200 roles and has appeared in 30 movies.

He has been nominated twice as best actor in Serbia in the theater organization "Joakim Vujiq".

The Albanian president awarded him the prize "Naim Frashëri".



Edon Rizvanolli

Zoran

Born and raised in Prishtina, he was forced to leave for Austria in the early 90s, after the wars in former Yugoslavia broke out. He started his acting carrier in 1993 as Romeo in an amateur Theatre Group in Salzburg, Austria. This was followed with a contract in a professional ensemble where he went

on to act for the next 3 years. In 1996 he moved to NYC and studied at the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute, for the next two years. After returning to Austria in 1998, he continued working as a stage actor in Vienna. During this period he became interested in other aspects of filmmaking and made his first short film Blown Away. Since 2007 he lives in Amsterdam where he works mainly as an actor. His debut feature "T'padashtun" premiered at the prestigious Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 2017 and was selected as Kosovo's entry for the 2018 Best Foreign Film Academy Award. He is a member of the European Film Academy since 2017. The Albanian president awarded him the prize "Naim Frashëri".

RITA
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TINKA
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