EXODUS FILMS PRESENTS
IMPERIUM
SAL GALOFARO
JOSH MASSAROTTI
FRANCESCA ARENA
TOM ARCARO
EXODUS FILMS PRESENTS "IMPERIUM" STARRING SAL GALOFARO JOSH MASSAROTTI
WITH FRANCESCA ARENA AND TOM ARCARO ORIGINAL MUSIC BY MAX BRUMBERG
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ALPER KASAP EDITED BY INDIGO PARER SOUND DESIGNER AND MIXING ALEX FRANCIS
COLOURIST DANIEL STONEHOUSE FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR MAIA ABBAS FIRST ASSISTANT CAMERA MERT DAMOGLU
SOUND RECORIST VITALY ZOLOTAREV AIR STYLIST & MAKEUP ARTIST AIDA WOLDU
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS INDIGO PARER JOSH MASSAROTTI AND MAIA ABBAS
PRODUCER NATALIA NESPECA DIRECTED BY INDIGO PARER
EXODUS FILMS

IMPERIUM

SYNOPSIS:

A father stuck in the past. A son searching for an escape. And a family business caught right in the middle, inching ever closer toward oblivion.

FILM PAGE:

instagram.com/imperium_shortfilm

SPECIFICATIONS:

Date of completion
October 2023

Language
English/Italian

Duration
19 minutes 59 seconds

Screening Format
DCP

Country of Origin
Australia

Sound
Dolby Digital 2.0/5.1

Genre
Drama

Ratio
2:39:1

Shooting Format
Digital 4k

CREATOR'S STATEMENT

I have wanted to tell this story for a long time, and as always, I once again found it to be the personal stories that end up being the most arduous to write.

The initial spark of what would later be called 'Imperium' began in 2016 when I watched Martin Scorsese's 'Mean Streets' for the first time.

The opening sequence: a montage of super-8 footage set to 'Be My Baby' by the Ronettes depicting Italian Americans and their day to day life in 1970's Manhattan, triggered a warm sense of familiarity for me.

I recall many a Christmas and Easter spent at my Italian grandparents house; Uncles, Aunties and cousins would gather and dust off old worn down polaroids and video tapes, depicting birthdays, holidays and candid moments at the family farm. These viewings, along with the exclamation "fuck look how skinny I was!" became a yearly ritual.

I tried many times over the past seven years to craft an original story in the style of 'Mean Streets' but each time I struggled to create something original, a story that isn't just another cliche Italian crime drama with an Australian paint job. This predicament lead me to abandon this project time after time.

After reflecting on this for a while I decided to change my approach to telling this story, I chose to explore two topics that are near and dear to my heart, the first being addiction and how it manifests across generations, the second being the fall of the Roman Empire.

This completely changed how I viewed ‘Imperium’, all of a sudden it became something more than just another film about Italians, it became a film about a chaotic family of flawed individuals each coping with the slow collapse of their livelihood.

Growing up on a farm in the Yarra Valley, I also wanted to share a part of Australian culture that I feel hasn’t been explored much in film, that being the life of produce growers in rural Australia.

Something else that I am really proud of is that there are only five lines of English in the entire film. Not only that but we didn’t settle for having the actors speak Italian, but instead we had the actors learn their lines in ‘Abruzzese’ a regional language spoken in the southern Italian Provence of Abruzzo.

This detail was incredibly important for me as growing up around my grandparents this was the only language I heard (standardised Italian only became widespread in Italy post world war II), this is a shared experience for many other descendants of southern Italian migrants as well.

To achieve this we enlisted the help of a resident of Abruzzo and a speaker of the now endangered language, Claudio Di Domenico. Claudio translated the script into Abruzzese and also helped the actors perfect their pronunciation, It truly was a joy hearing the language again years after the passing of my grandparents.

I am extremely proud of the work everyone has done in helping me bring this very personal story to life.

JOSH MASSAROTTI
WRITER

DIRECTORS STATEMENT

I've been a teller of stories for as long as I can remember. There was me when I was 5, playing in the back yard with nothing but a broom stick, pretending I was a wizard and believing it utterly and entirely. Or me when I was 14, in school and discovering drama class for first time, eyes all wide with ideas and curiosity. For a long time acting is what was at the core of me, but we grow older and our sensibilities and interests change, naturally.

When Josh first came to me with the proposal that I direct our next film 'Imperium', I recall a sense of excitement sinking in, shortly followed by a heightened sense of fear. Throughout the pre-production, that never went away. The fear of the unknown. And the self critiquing of course, things like 'You're not right for this', 'You don't speak Italian'. It went on and on. And so soon enough, it's time to block out the head noise and take a step back to say: You're a story teller. You always have been.

For me, that was the switch that needed to be flicked. Back to basics. Let's talk character, let's talk place and let's sit with these people for a moment, to be a fly on the wall. In another time and another place. That's the beauty of cinema isn't it. To sit in a theatre, lights going down, popcorn in hand. To be transported, if only for a moment, to a new world. To people watch. To ask questions and forget about your own life for a while. That's story telling and that's why I love films.

Josh wrote a wonderful screenplay with 'Imperium', it explores addiction, inter-generational trauma, family and touches on the hardships of immigration. But the script doesn't bother itself to throw these things in your face. They're layered in there for you to find. I hope we've gone some ways to realising the script Josh entrusted me with.

We had an amazing cast on this film, coupled with a brilliant crew who were working at the top of their game. I'm proud of each and every one of them. And I'm eternally grateful that I was able to be a part of it.

INDIGO PARER
DIRECTOR

Well... it's as clear to me as if it happened yesterday. My brother and I had finished the first day of the harvest. And the next morning he was gone...
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CASTING *'IMPERIUM'*

Josh Massarotti as LUCIO

Casting for 'IMPERIUM' began as early as January 2023. Writer and Exodus Co-Founder Josh Massarotti, had always intended to take on the role of the eldest son, LUCIO. This was a world that Josh understood inside out and resonated with him on a personal level.

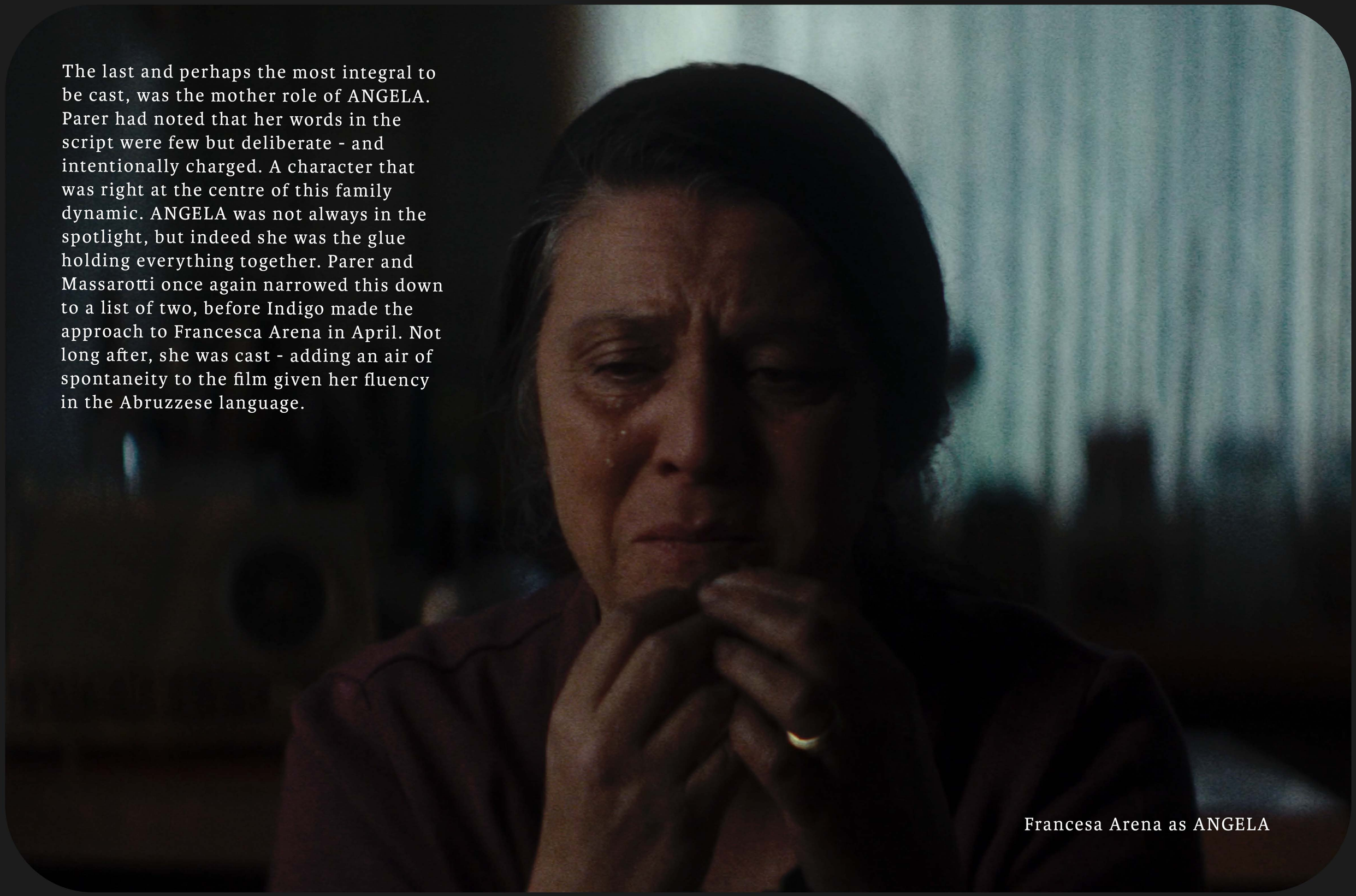
In February, an extensive scouting search for the role of VINCE began, whereby actor Tom Arcaro was discovered and asked to audition. By the end of that month, Tom was offered the role to which he accepted, dedicating his performance to his late Nonno who had passed away only a month beforehand - and like Vince - was the youngest of his siblings, having grown up in a farming family for most of his early life.

Tom Arcaro as VINCE

Sal Galofaro as JULIO

When it came to casting the role of JULIO, Director Indigo Parer and Writer Josh Massarotti had back and forth discussions, before narrowing it down to a two horse race. Audition tapes were reviewed before an in person meeting with Sal Galofaro was organised. Parer and Massarotti were keen to see Sal challenge himself with a role unlike any he'd played before, and with the nature of the film's script meaning it would be spoken predominantly in the niche Italian language of Abruzzese - this proved to be just that. In Mid March, Galofaro agreed to come onboard as the lead of the film.

The last and perhaps the most integral to be cast, was the mother role of ANGELA. Parer had noted that her words in the script were few but deliberate - and intentionally charged. A character that was right at the centre of this family dynamic. ANGELA was not always in the spotlight, but indeed she was the glue holding everything together. Parer and Massarotti once again narrowed this down to a list of two, before Indigo made the approach to Francesca Arena in April. Not long after, she was cast - adding an air of spontaneity to the film given her fluency in the Abruzzese language.



Francesa Arena as ANGELA

PRE PRODUCTION

Pre-production took place over 4 months in the lead up to filming. With the cast locked in, Claudio Di Domenico was bought onboard as Dialect Coach/Cultural Advisor - working closely with Sal, Josh and Tom to perfect the dialogue that needed to be spoken in Abruzzese.

Parer and Massarotti prepared a comprehensive list of more than 50 props that needed to be hired as set dressing for the house interior's 1980 setting, while also working with Producer Natalia Nespeca to sort through the logistics of hiring a ute that was period accurate.

Aside from this, Josh worked closely with his older brother to acquire an old working Television set that, paired with the necessary adapters, would allow them to showcase footage from an external source - directly onto the TV's screen.

With filming dates locked in close to the end of May, Josh liaised with his father to prepare the garlic farm as it would need to be presented in the film. This entailed the garlic rows being made ready, as well as a working period accurate tractor being placed into position close to the dates of cameras rolling.

JULIO
I gave you money last week.

LUCIO
Yeah last week is last week...
Yesterday I had to pay my mate down
the road so he could fix the ute.

JULIO
And why didn't you fix it yourself?

LUCIO
The alternator needed to be fixed,
it's not really something I can do
myself...

JULIO
Well you'd better learn, no amount
of money can pay for lack of
knowledge.

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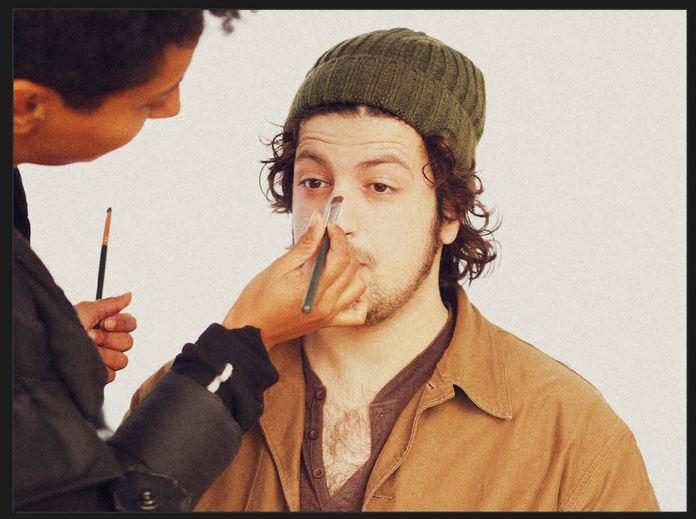
LOCATIONS

An initial recce day took place in March, at a house in Monbulk. Parer and Massarotti took a liking to the locations glass stained windows that featured throughout different rooms - noting how it could lend itself to some mesmerising shots in the screenplay. The house was however, entirely empty and void of electricity, resulting in logistical complications that meant it eventually fell through as a viable option.

After much deliberation and research in regard to a suitable house for the film's primary location, a second recce day was organised for the 12th April 2023. In attendance was Director Indigo Parer, Actor/Writer Josh Massarotti and Director of Photography Alper Kasap.

The first stop off on the day, was at a garlic farm in Nar Nar Goon. The team discussed the farm's seemingly endless rows and the way the camera could be placed to create a sense of scale but also emphasise to the audience how tiresome this work that the characters endured on daily basis, needed to feel.

Director INDIGO PARER on set



The three then headed near 50km north of that location, to a house in Wandin North. Immediately, Kasap took a liking to both the patterns of the floor and the curtains in the lounge room.

The entire house in fact, was brilliantly textured in all rooms that would be needed in the film. So perfect was it, for the screenplay's time setting, that it would only require minimal set dressing - complete with the props yet to be added. This second recce would prove to be the last, with both locations locked in soon after.

Principle photography commenced on the 10th of June and wrapped two days later on the 12th. Kasap shot the film on an Alexa 35 that was paired with Hawk anamorphic lenses; A decision that he and Parer had made not long after that recce day back in April.

POST PRODUCTION

Having previously edited ‘Land of Nod’ with Exodus Films, Parer had upgraded his workspace to facilitate the demand of the ‘IMPERIUM’ workload. Alongside writer Josh Massarotti, Parer edited the film over the course of Mid June through until September 20th, upon which date the film received it’s final picture lock.

All footage and elements were sent on to ‘Frank Sound Audio Post Production’ located in Sydney, where the film received foley work and dialogue mixing over the course of October, before a final audio mix in both stereo and 5.1 was provided.

Lastly, the three Exodus Co-Founders attended a day at Crayon Studios in South Melbourne on the 24th of October, to oversee the colouring process of ‘IMPERIUM’ with colourist Dan Stonehouse. Three days later on the 27th of October, Parer returned for a final session with Dan to finesse the finer details. The two sessions resulting in a desaturated and rustic film look for the world of the characters in their 1980’s rural Victoria setting.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

JULIO - Sal Galofaro

Sal has been working in the industry for more than 20 years. His initial studying began at the Melbourne Acting Studio, under the guidance of Bruce Alexander. He has also trained at the Peter Sardi School of Acting and still attends classes as the Melbourne Actors Lab with Peter Kalos.

In 2018, Sal played the role of Attila in the short film 'Broken' (2018) before going on to star in the lead role of the short film 'Crossfire' (2019), directed by Mert Berdilek.

Recently, he has played the lead role in 'Mr Gypsie' (2023) directed by Aaron Noyes, whilst also appearing as Frank in Gabriel Carruba's critically acclaimed debut feature film 'Sunflower' (2023).

LUCIO - Josh Massarotti (Writer / Executive Producer)

Josh Massarotti is a Welsh/Italian actor and filmmaker based in Melbourne, Australia. He made his directorial debut in 2022 with 'Land of Nod' (2022), which went on to win 'Best Faith-based Film' at the Wales International Film Festival. Josh recently starred alongside Sal Galofaro in 'Mr Gypsie' (2023), followed by a starring role in Hano Vivaldoran's debut film 'Why Can't We Have Nice Things?' (2023).

Following on from the completion of 'Land of Nod' (2022), Josh returned to finish writing 'IMPERIUM' (2024) before pushing it through to pre production in early 2023.

Currently, Josh is writing and seeking funding for a feature length version of the Italian-Australian period drama, which he plans to put into pre-production in the foreseeable future.

Joshua's passion for history, philosophy and linguistics is heavily reflected in the stories he tells.

ANGELA - Francesca Arena

Francesca graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts and soon after that began her performing career in 1996 with the Asia/South Africa tour of 'Les Miserables'. She is best known for performing the role of Grizabella in the International Touring cast of Andrew Lloyd Webber's 'Cats the Musical'. Other roles have included Abuela Claudia in StageArt's critically acclaimed 'In the Heights', Hodel in 'Fiddler on the Roof', and Vesuvia Versace in the smash hit comedy 'Eurobeat!'

Recent screen credits have included 'Secret Bridesmaid's Business', 'Leaving Darkness', 'Boy in the River', 'I wanted to be a Butterfly' and the role of Jacqui in the upcoming feature film 'Love, Tea and Epiphany'. Francesca is pursuing her other love of writing and directing with her debut short film 'Day of Birth', which will be released later this year.

VINCE - Tom Arcaro

Tom is an Italian-Australian actor, writer and director from the south east suburbs of Melbourne. In 2011, he started his arts journey when he began training in acting at Evolution Acting (formerly Screen Actors Australia) under the mentorship of actor Aaron Walton.

He made his debut in musical theatre, playing the role of Rolf in 'The Sound of Music' (2017), before going on to play Uncle Fester in 'The Addams Family' (2019).

Tom returned to film, both in front and behind the camera in 2019, when he directed and acted in 'White Rose' (2020). Since then he has also gone on to direct the award winning short film 'Breathe' (2021), as well as appear in 'Wicked' (2020) as Bog.

Tom's focus of late has been on the pre production of his debut feature film 'The Suppertime Sinners' (TBA), and it's adjacent proof of concept short film 'The Suppertime Sinners: Entrée' (2021).

JULIO (V.O)
She went on with her day as if nothing had happened. But from that day on... it was clear that in her mind, she only had one true son.

JULIO (CONT'D)
And now our kingdom descends from one of gold...to one of iron and rust.

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PRODUCTION BIOGRAPHIES

Director/Editor/Executive Producer - Indigo Parer

Since graduating in 2015 from the New York Film Academy (Gold Coast) with a Diploma in Screen and Media, Indigo has relocated to Melbourne where he made his theatre debut as Gately, in the stage play 'PVT Wars' (2018), before co-founding Exodus Films in early 2020.

In 2021 he gained experience as a First Assistant Director, working on award winning films such as 'Land of Nod' and 'I Wanted to be a Butterfly', the latter of which he won 'Best Editing' at the Rome Independent Film Awards.

Recently, Indigo has appeared in the Slovenian-Australian feature film 'Moja Vesna' (2022), before shifting his full attention to producing 'IMPERIUM' (2024), with which he will also make his directorial debut.

First Assistant Director/Executive Producer - Maia Abbas

Maia is an Iraqi-born Australian actor and co-founder of Exodus Films. Since migrating to Australia in 2015, she has been working in the film industry both behind the scenes and as an actor.

After directing her first experimental film, 'TrichotilloMAIA' (2018), Maia took on the role of 1st AD on the short, 'The Fall' (2020), which was a Dendy Awards Finalist at the 2020 Sydney Film Festival. She co-produced and acted in Exodus Films' first short, 'Land of Nod' (2021), awared winner at the Wales International Film Festival. She will be the female lead of the upcoming Matchbox Pictures/ABC production, 'House of Gods' (2024), and will also be leading the Season 2024 MTC production of 'English'.

Other upcoming credits include the Netflix series, 'Apple Cider Vinegar' and feature film, 'Blue Canaries'. Previous television credits include the ABC series 'Savage River', 'Fires', and Channel Seven's 'Secret Bridesmaids' Business'.

Director of Photography - Alper Kasap

Alper Kasap is a multi award-winning cinematographer who has worked on a broad spectrum of narrative projects. Alper is known for his dedication to telling evocative stories by virtue of establishing a distinct visual language that creates a visceral and immersive experience for the viewer.

Alper is an alumni of the highly acclaimed 'American Society of Cinematographers Masterclass' held in Hollywood. He has also twice won the coveted Gold award as the best cinematographer in the state at the 'Australian Cinematography Society Awards.' In 2020, he worked on Mert Berdilek's 'The Fall' (2020), which was selected as a finalist for 'Best Film' at the Sydney Film Festival. He also worked on 'Something Has Died in the Forest' (2019), a script that was mentored by Jane Campion.

As of late, Alper has split his time working on projects in Australia, the US and Turkey - where earlier this year - he finished shooting an eagerly awaited 8 part TV Series for a major streaming platform.

Producer - Natalia Nespeca

Natalia has been in the creative world since she was 4 years old, training in tap and jazz dance for the first 13 years of her childhood. She went on to complete a Bachelor in Performing Arts at Monash University, studied the Meisner technique at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York and has consistently trained at the Melbourne Actors Lab under Peter Kalos.

She has worked in radio, however her primary passion has been in the theatre and in front of the camera. Natalia has performed at the Malthouse Theatre, worked on various music videos, commercials, independent shorts and features, appeared in 'Behave Yourself!' for Channel 7, 'What Could Go Wrong?' For ABC iview and 'Utopia' for ABC, as well as lent her voice and writing skills to the pilot of an upcoming Aussie animation series thats made its way into Pixar's hands.

Her bread and butter for the past 13 years has been working in production and storytelling in light entertainment for network television. Some shows have included 'Masterchef', 'The Weekly' and 'Hunted' (to name a few), with her career now landing with Working Dog on 'The Cheap Seats'.

Composer - Max Brumberg

Born and raised in central Germany, Max Brumberg now lives in the South of France. He has been a woodwind instrument maker for 20 years and has specialised in the Ancient Greek Aulos since 2018. His instruments are played all around the world and his work was the subject of a 2023 Swiss television documentary (Passe-moi les Jumelles).

In addition to making the Aulos, Max has also played it in various circumstances and his music has been used in many short films from France to Ireland, Australia, Brazil and the USA.

Sound Designer/Foley Artist - Alex Francis

Alex is the Supervising Sound editor at Frank Sound, a multi award winning Audio Production Service based in Sydney, Australia. Alex's recent credits include foley recording on 'The Power of the Dog' (nominated for 'Best Sound' at the 2022 Academy Awards) and Sound Designer on 'Monkie Kid' (2022 ASSG Winner for 'Best Sound for an Animation').

Colourist - Daniel Stonehouse

Daniel Stonehouse is an established colourist working across short and long form projects, and is also the director, current owner and co-founder of Crayon, a Colour Focused post production organisation based in Melbourne, Australia.

His recent credits include feature documentaries 'The Defender', 'Bromley: Light After Dark'; and award winning short film 'Marungka Tjalatjunu (Dipped in Black)'.

ABOUT

EXODUS FILMS

Founded in 2020, Exodus strives to tell compelling and sincere stories that explore timeless archetypal truths; Whether it be period pieces, speculative science-fiction, or dinner table dramas. The company was created with the intent to break away from common constructs of established genres and formula, reimagining how stories can be told.