



Karlovy Vary  
International Film Festival  
East of the West – Competition

# AGA'S HOUSE

a film by LENDITA ZEQIRAJ

N'ART + WOOF FILMS IN ASSOCIATION WITH SACREBLEU PRODUCTIONS, SKA-NDAL AND SY13 PRESENTS "AGA'S HOUSE" A FILM BY LENDITA ZEQIRAJ  
STARRING ARTI LOKAJ, ROZAFI CELAJ, ADRIANA MATOSHI, BASRI LUSHTAKU, SHENGYL ISMAILI, MELIHATE QENA, REBEKA QENA, MOLIKE MAXHUNI

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY LENDITA ZEQIRAJ DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY SOFIAN EL FANI SOUND ENGINEER NICOLAS MAS PRODUCTION DESIGNER LENDITA ZEQIRAJ  
EDITED BY KEKA BERISHA AND THOMAS MARCHAND SOUND EDITING SUPERVISOR JEAN-BARTHELEMY VELAY SOUND EDITING PELLUMB BALLATA SOUND MIX AYMERIC DUPAS  
PRODUCED BY BUJAR KABASI CO-PRODUCED BY RON DYENS AND GENÇ PERMETI EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS BUJAR KABASI, LENDITA ZEQIRAJ AND HAMEZ ZEQIRAJ ASSOCIATE PRODUCER RIO KOJIMA

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NART FILMS



SY13



WOOF FILMS



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# AGA'S HOUSE

(original title: SHPIA E AGËS)

Drama, Social, Coming of Age, Women  
Kosovo / Croatia / France / Albania  
107 minutes

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY: Lendita Zeqiraj

CAST: Arti Lokaj, Rozafa Çelaj, Adriana Matoshi, Basri Lushtaku,  
Shengyi Ismaili, Melihate Qena, Rebeka Qena,  
Molikë Maxhuni

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE: Albanian

PRODUCED BY: Bujar Kabasi  
PRODUCTION COMPANY: N'ART FILMS, Kosovo  
IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH: WOOF FILMS, Croatia;  
SACREBLEU PRODUCTIONS, France;  
SKA-NDAL PRODUCTIONS, Albania  
SY13 FILMS, Albania

OFFICIAL FILM WEB-PAGE: [www.agashouse.com](http://www.agashouse.com)  
OFFICIAL FACEBOOK PAGE: [www.facebook.com/agathefilm](http://www.facebook.com/agathefilm)

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## LOGLINE

A young boy living in a house of women must hurry to save a woman who is teaching him Serbian, so that he can continue the search for his missing father.

## SYNOPSIS

Aga, a 9-year-old boy is secretly struggling to find his missing father, while living with five frantic women in the house outside the city. He makes money by selling cigarettes on the street, where he meets Cera, an arrogant and abusive man who has a restraining order to get near the house because of molesting behavior towards one of the women. But when one of the women attempts a suicide, he is the only one around to help Aga take her to the hospital.

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## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I am an observer of the world around me and my inspiration is everyday life experience and authentic people mindset. I find the individual's life experience particularly fascinating but I am specifically interested in a human relationship.

This comes probably from life experience as a witness of many different changes in our society where some of them were difficult and painful. There was a time where all the existence values crushed down, letting us immersed in an absurd state of mind.

All my past and current projects have dealt with the complexity of human relations and the vulnerability of people, placed in the very particular contexts. I have also worked in documentaries and experimental short films in search for new mediums and means of expression. Even my latest films "BALCONY" and "FENCE" speak about a situation where complex human relations reveal the mentality and the actual problems of our society, where humor and violence are present elements that characterize our mentality. Therefore, in all of my projects this far, the line between comedy and tragedy is very thinly, almost unnoticeably drawn.

The characters in "AGA'S HOUSE" are people that surround me every day. Daring people who, even after their horrific experiences, manage to live their lives. I find fascinating their ability to maintain the joy, smile and sense of humor, and at the same time, live with it and not get crushed. Their life is very simple and basic, with few moments that define people's mindset, deep societal wounds, in a culture and a country where humor is the only therapy that they have.



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I want to capture the feeling of many mixed emotions of this very complex issue, where deep wounds are hidden and the best way to deal with them is to manage to live with them, through the process of enduring, adapting and surviving. The occurrence is particular to Kosovar women, who get wrapped up in this system by pressing their desires and feelings, getting crushed into a constant anxiety that ends up defining them.

They discover new boundaries for their emotional pain, loss, happiness and exhilarating joy, they need a medium through which to express and convey their feelings. Searching for love and affection to fulfill the emptiness of the missing father, Aga approaches and hugs Cera. Zdenka shows affection to Aga, in order to reach her own daughter. Kumrija is able to speak out her own story through the intermediary of a journalist.

The story is simple, but yet it reveals many complex issues of our society, showing the ways in which people filter and digest their bruising experiences, when no one is around to help them, or without any professional care.

It's a very small slice of characters' daily life in today's Kosovo society, with all its angst, pressure, and complexity of relationships.





LENDITA ZEQRIRAJ / Writer & Director - Born in Kosovo, award winning film director Lendita Zeqiraj is declared 'National Filmmaker of the Year 2014', and won "The Annual Film Excellence Award for Cinematic Achievements" by the Kosovo Ministry of Culture. She's worked on a number of shorts and documentary films, which have participated in over 300 International Film Festivals, such as International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Thessaloniki, Cairo, Leeds, Vilnius etc., winning prizes in a number of them.

Her last short film FENCE, won Best Short award at Palm Springs Int'l ShortFest, Hamptons and New Orleans film festival and has been triple Qualified for Oscar® Academy Award, and continues traveling throughout worldwide film festivals.

Her previous short film BALCONY, premiered at 70th Venice Film Festival and screened at over 170 International Film Festivals, such as Telluride Film Festival, Palm Springs Short Fest, Warsaw Film Festival, Busan International Film Festival etc. and won over 35 international awards, including the Special Jury Award at the AFI FEST 2013.

#### FILMOGRAPHY

- AGA'S HOUSE – feature / 2019
- FENCE – short / 2018
- BALCONY – short / 2013
- ANOTHER CHANCE – short documentary / 2013
- AMNESIA – short experimental / 2012
- WE'RE NOT IN PARADISE – short documentary / 2011
- ALBANIAN EGYPTIAN – short documentary / 2010
- CRY FOR RECOGNITION – short documentary / 2009
- EXIT – short fiction / 2003



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## Q&A with LENDITA ZEQRIRAJ

**As an observer of the world that surrounds you, what were the elements that drove you to tell such an intimate story and which of them are being reflected to the characters of your heroines?**

The elements that are found in my characters, reflect people who somehow never fully had the right to speak, and consequently never fully mastered language. They communicate, but not to the fullest domain of their right. The notions of judgement and accusation, but also of feelings, solidarity and love have almost entirely been distorted.

**Your hero, Aga, is growing up in a rather particular environment, since apart from his mother, he's surrounded by four other women, while he's looking for a father figure. Why did you need to create this contrast in your story?**

The question already contains a significant part of my answer. His life among women is in a way like living in limbo, where there is no future. Aga needs his father in order to return to where he's never been before, since the future is always experienced like a return to a quiet, secure past. But from that past, the father figure is missing. Aga needs that figure

and he will try to find a father even where he cannot be found. That, for him, would mean salvation. I needed this contrast, and a resolution, as much as my character needs them. An adolescent boy, who cannot accept growing up, unless he feels free and finds a father for himself. Kosovo is, in fact, full of people like Aga.

**The women that inhabit Aga's House have been victims of different situations, does their reality offer a glimpse of what Kosovo is today?**

Kosovo's reality is not that far from what is depicted in the film, and in some cases I could say that it contains more reality than the prevailing conditions of the country. This house is the scene where women have gained a sort of freedom. Even if it is presented as a very simple story, there is more complexity behind that. At the same time, I believe that the kind of cinema I make is based on people's relationships, so anyone would react similarly in such a situation. Aga's House is a Kosovar story, but it can be set anywhere in the world.



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**Does the film also follow a similar path of your latest shorts (*Balcony and Fence*) regarding the complexity of human relationships?**

I always start with the characters on my mind and I shape the story while I write. When I am writing, I have the entire setting in my head, starting from framing to even production design, and that is also a reason why I do it myself in all my films. I let my characters evolve, without judging them, I never criticize their position. I could say that my approach is a more “brutal” immersion into the screenplay.

**How hard was it to build this tension and balance it among your actresses especially when with most of them you also collaborated in your previous films?**

The work with my actors was the same as in the past, with the only difference here being the duration of the film, which doesn't really affect the procedure. We started the rehearsal process, two months before the beginning of the shooting, and by evolving the story of each character, as well as the tension and balance of relationships among them in any given situation. Another important factor was for my actors to learn their lines by heart and

without any improvisation, as everything was shot in long takes. So, even if the text may seem simple, I fully understood my actors when they complained that it would have been easier to perform a Shakespearean play than this!

**In recent years we have seen that Kosovar cinema is more and more visible, especially films by female directors, with premieres in A-list festivals and with a good festival run afterwards. How can you explain that?**

The issue of the existence of Kosovo, has not been fully solved, and hasn't been understood properly either. As the solution was left in half, it became more difficult with time and is prone to deteriorate. This is more evident among political and social minorities; like Kosovo Albanian populations that have a “half-political” status, and for minorities with “half-social” status, like women are. Freedom and emancipation are supposed to be one and the same thing and I believe that explains Kosovo's presence in film and women expressing themselves through it.

**Definitely**

\*I try to put words and images to the narrowness of space given to me to live.





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## CHARACTERS

AGA, aged 9, grew up in refuge house with his mother, he's selling cigarettes and marijuana on the street to support his mother and save money to achieve his goal, to find his father who he never met. To achieve this, he connects with Zdenka, a Croatian woman so she can teach him Serbian language.

EMIRA, aged 21, is cheerful but naïve city girl. A talented singer who became victim of forced prostitution while trying to pursue her career. After escaping traffickers, she found refuge in the house with other women, becoming best friends with Luma.

LUMA, aged 23, rural girl, a victim of forced marriage. After her much older husband dies, she left home with Cera from whom she soon escapes and finds refuge in the house.

CERA, aged 43, a hustler, a gambler, a local thug. He has a restraining order to approach the refuge house, cause of molesting behavior towards Luma. But anyways, he continuously goes around hoping he'll catch her.

KUMRIJA, aged 32, is Aga's mother, rape victim in the time of war, who was forced to seek refuge in the house when she found out that she's pregnant.

GJYLA, aged 70, a widow whose son was killed in the war, and since she has no living male member of the family, she's been forced out from her home by the relatives. She found a refuge in the house while waiting the court decision about her case.

ZDENKA, aged 40, is depressed middle age divorcee of a different ethnicity (Croatian).



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## ACTORS

ARTI LOKAJ, 2009, is a Kosovar young talented actor, in less than two years he played in three features and two short films.

Selected Credits: AGA'S HOUSE (2019), Fields of Black-birds (2018), FENCE (2018), Rooftop Story (2017), Lost in Hope (2017).



ROZAFI ÇELAJ, 1994, is a multitalented Kosovar student of film directing, her acting talent has been discovered by Lendita Zeqiraj in her film FENCE and a bit later AGA'S HOUSE.

Selected Credits: AGA'S HOUSE (2019), FENCE (2018).



ADRIANA MATOSHI, 1980, is an award-winning Kosovar Actress. She's worked on over 40 Theatre Plays and Films. With her work she participated in many International Film and Theatre Festivals and is 4 times winner of best actress prize. Lately she's focusing her acting in films.

Selected Credits: AGA'S HOUSE (2019), FENCE (2018), Cold November (2018), Marriage (2017), Unwanted (2017), Father (2015), BALCONY (2013), The Return (2012)



BASRI LUSHTAKU, 1973, a Kosovar actor active both in film and theater, he worked on over 20 Theatre Plays and Films.

Selected Credits: AGA'S HOUSE (2019), The Three of Us (2013), Double Life (2007), Kosova: Desperate Search (2006), Metroplet (2005).



SHENGYL ISMAILI,

Selected Credits: AGA'S HOUSE (2019), A Month (2017), Kanarinët e Dinë (2014), BALCONY (2013).



MELIHATE QENA, 1949, is a Kosovar actress, theater and TV director, she's worked on over 60 Theatre Plays and Films.

Selected Credits: AGA'S HOUSE (2019), FENCE (2018), Marriage (2017), Kësulatat (2017), A Dream (2017), A Performance (2016), Shok (2015), Donkeys of the Border (2009).



REBEKA QENA,

Selected Credits: AGA'S HOUSE (2019), Edhe 5 Minuta (2013), Besa (2013), Varsja (2002).



## FULL CREDITS

Written and Directed by: LENDITA ZEQR AJ

Produced by: BUJAR KABASI

Co-Producers: GENC PERMETI  
RON DYENS

Executive Producers: BUJAR KABASI  
LENDITA ZEQR AJ  
HAMËZ ZEQR AJ

Cast: ARTI LOKAJ  
ROZAF A ÇELAJ  
ADRIANA MATOSHI  
BASRI LUSHTAKU  
SHENGYL ISMAILI  
MELIHATE QENA  
REBEKA QENA  
MOLIKË MAXHUNI  
EGLA CENO  
LAURA BUNA  
ANTHONY MOREAU

Director of Photography: SOFIAN EL FANI  
Production Designer: LENDITA ZEQR AJ  
Editing: KEKA BERISHA  
THOMAS MARCHAND  
Associate Producer: RIO KOJIMA

Line Producer: BUJAR KABASI  
Production Manager: LIRIDON CAHANI  
1st Assistant Director: ANTHONY MOREAU  
2nd Assistant Director: HANA QENA  
Production Supervisor: BUJAR KABASI



1st Assistant Camera: Wafa Mimouni  
2nd Assistant Camera: Jetmir Zenelaj  
DIT: Nart Zeqiraj  
Editing Intern: Anouk Delpeut  
Color Grading: Yov Moor  
Make Up: Jeanne Dehee  
Sound Engineer: Nicolas Mas  
Boom Operators: Olivier Pelletier  
Doriane Racine  
S. Sound Editor: Jean-Barthelemy Velay  
Sound Editor: Pëllumb Ballata  
Sound Mix: Aymeric Dupas  
Assistant Sound editor: Nok Selmani  
Opening Titles: Nata Zeqiri Berisha  
Wardrobe: Krenare Rugova  
Props & Set Design: Burim Arifi  
Props Assistant: Armend Ratkoceri  
Wardrobe Assistants: Deltina Sylla  
Yllëza Mazrekaj  
Gaffer: Astrit Bica  
Best Boy: Berat Hajdari  
Key Grip: Trajche Velichkovski  
Electricians: Arlind Brajshori  
Zgjim Jashari  
Location Manager: Marko Jelavic

Production Coordinators: Bujar Kabasi  
Claire Burnoud  
Post-Production Co.: Bujar Kabasi  
Casting Associates: Bardha Celaj  
Lendita Idrizi  
Vesa Qena  
Set Photographer: Atdhe Mulla  
Production Assistants: Ylli Berisha  
Remzi Ajazi  
Alvis Muja  
Tomor Cahani  
Manon Messiant  
Assistants to producers: Uresa Selimi  
Elida Rasha  
Laura Buna  
Accountants: Fidaim Dobra  
Dario Tolic  
Maxi Cortez  
Legal Advisors: Jean-Michel Orion  
Balazs Zachar  
Jerome Boucher  
Interns: Juliette Marquet  
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