

PANOPTICON

a film by George Sikharulidze



Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival
Crystal Globe Competition

World Premiere

After his father abandons him to become an Orthodox monk, Sandro struggles to reconcile his duty to God and his awakening sexuality, which manifests in uncontrollable ways and leads him to questionable behavior, as he searches for meaning and belonging in the turbulent society of post-Soviet Georgia.





SYNOPSIS

With a mother working abroad illegally and a grandma too old to substitute a parent, **Sandro** is left practically alone after his father's departure. To fulfill a new obligation as a son of a future monk, he must turn to religion himself, and without realizing it, becomes oppressed by the invisible spiritual surveillance of his father and God that shapes his behavior.

This sudden change comes at the peak of Sandro's sexual awakening, creating in him a powerful conflict between body and soul. Convinced that sex before marriage is sinful, he represses his desires towards his high-school sweetheart, **Tina**, and instead starts to manifest all this sexual frustration in inappropriate ways, like touching random girls in public and exposing himself to the mother of his football teammate, **Lasha**. While developing an erotic fixation towards Lasha's mother behind his back, Sandro easily falls under his influence as Lasha is slightly older and very charming. But he is also a nationalist, who quickly lures Sandro into a rising Christian Fascist movement.

Sandro tries to reconcile these opposing forces within his heart. He fights for survival and tries to make sense of the notions of faith, love and manhood at the most formative time of his life - a trial that will eventually prove to be a revelation of his humanity.



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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When my father left the family, I was 15 years old. A few years earlier, my mother had left to work abroad to support us, so I was left with my grandmother, who could not replace my parents. Feeling orphaned by his departure, I turned to the church to replace my father with another Father. As my faith grew, so did my sexual awakening and a great internal conflict between my 15-year-old body and soul started to haunt me. I could not rationalize it then, but I felt afraid and sensed that this battle would soon get me to a point of explosion and that the outcome would determine my future. Panopticon is about this decisive moment.

I want to explore how religious and ideological fundamentalism can lead young people towards unhealthy sexual behavior, trauma, alienation and eventually violence, and as such, this film is an alert to these dangers looming over them. But like everywhere else in the world, life for kids is bigger than the threats surrounding them. The film seeks to fully capture the young Georgian spirit and the joys of being a teenager, the small and bigger mistakes, and most important of all, the lessons learned.

Sandro's search for a father figure puts him on a dangerous path until he recognizes the fault in his behavior. He doesn't do it with the help of God or a parent, he does it through his own painful experience and this is precisely where the growing and coming of age happens. Identifying that what you believe, do, and say hurts others is already the first step and I want this film to embrace the weight, but also the breakthrough of Sandro's first step.

GEORGE SIKHARULIDZE WRITER/DIRECTOR

George Sikharulidze is a Georgian-American filmmaker. He holds a B.S. in Media Communications from New York University and an M.F.A. in Film Directing from Columbia University.

His short films include *The Fish that Drowned* (2014), which premiered at the Clermont Ferrand Film Festival, *Red Apples* (2016) and *A New Year* (2018) which were both selected at the Toronto International Film Festival and *Fatherland*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2019.

His first feature film *Panopticon* (2024) was developed at the Residence of Cannes Film Festival, as well as the Torino Script Lab 2019 and Torino Feature Lab 2020. George has taught screenwriting and directing at New York University and Columbia University. He is currently an Associate Professor of Film at the University of Notre Dame, USA.





A young man with short dark hair, seen from the back and side, is looking towards a wall. The wall is densely decorated with numerous small, framed religious icons and pictures. In the center, a wooden shelf holds a lit candle and a larger icon of a religious figure. The lighting is warm and focused on the wall, creating a contemplative atmosphere.

CAST

Sandro
Father
Natalia
Lasha
Tina
Lana
Beka

Data Chachua
Malkhaz Abuladze
Ia Sukhitashvili
Vakho Kedeladze
Salome Gelenidze
Marita Meskhoradze
Andro Japaridze



CREW

Writer/Director

George Sikharulidze

Producer

Vladimer Katcharava

Co-producers

Olivier Chantriaux, Luca Cabriolu,
Anamaria Antoci, Archil Gelovani,
Sergey Yahontov, Andrea Di Blasio

DoP

Oleg Mutu

Production Design

Ketevan Nadibaidze

Editor

Giorgia Villa

Original Score

Chiara Costanza

Sound Design

Alexandru Dumitru

Re-recording Mixer

Paolo Segat

Costumes

Ketevan Kalandadze

Make Up

Eka Chikhradze

Casting

Eka Mjavanadze, Tekla Javakhadze

Assistant Director

Dali Narimanidze

Production Manager

Gio Kavteladze

A young man with short dark hair, wearing a dark green t-shirt, is shown in profile, looking down and to the left. He is in a dimly lit environment, likely a nightclub or bar, with blurred background lights in shades of red and blue. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

SANDRO (Data Chachua)

Sandro is a kind-hearted, introverted teenager, who gets increasingly overwhelmed by the demands of his sexually awakening body, while feeling a growing responsibility to be a good Christian son after his father's departure. He is caught between a public life of imitation and a private life of lust. When his body wins over his soul and drives him to commit sexually inappropriate acts, he tries to process the guilt by praying, until the cycle repeats itself in an increasingly escalating order, leading to an ultimate outburst of violence. Sandro's future is hanging by a thread.



FATHER (Malkhaz Abuladze)

When his father leaves, Sandro befriends Lasha, a big brother figure, who has also grown up without a father. Unlike Sandro, who must replace his father with God, Lasha has filled the void of his own father's absence by joining a Christian Fascist movement. But Sandro and Lasha are not the only fatherless characters - the problem of a male parental figure pervades all throughout the film.

A woman with a white towel wrapped around her head like a turban, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. She is holding a lit cigarette in her right hand. The background is a simple, slightly out-of-focus interior space. In the foreground on the right, the blurred profile of another person's head is visible.

NATALIA (Ia Sukhitashvili)

In a patriarchal religious society, where men are absent or incapable, it is the strong female characters who guide Sandro towards the path of redemption.

LASHA
(Vakhtang Kedeladze)



TINA
(Salome Gelenidze)





LANA
(Marita Meskhoradze)



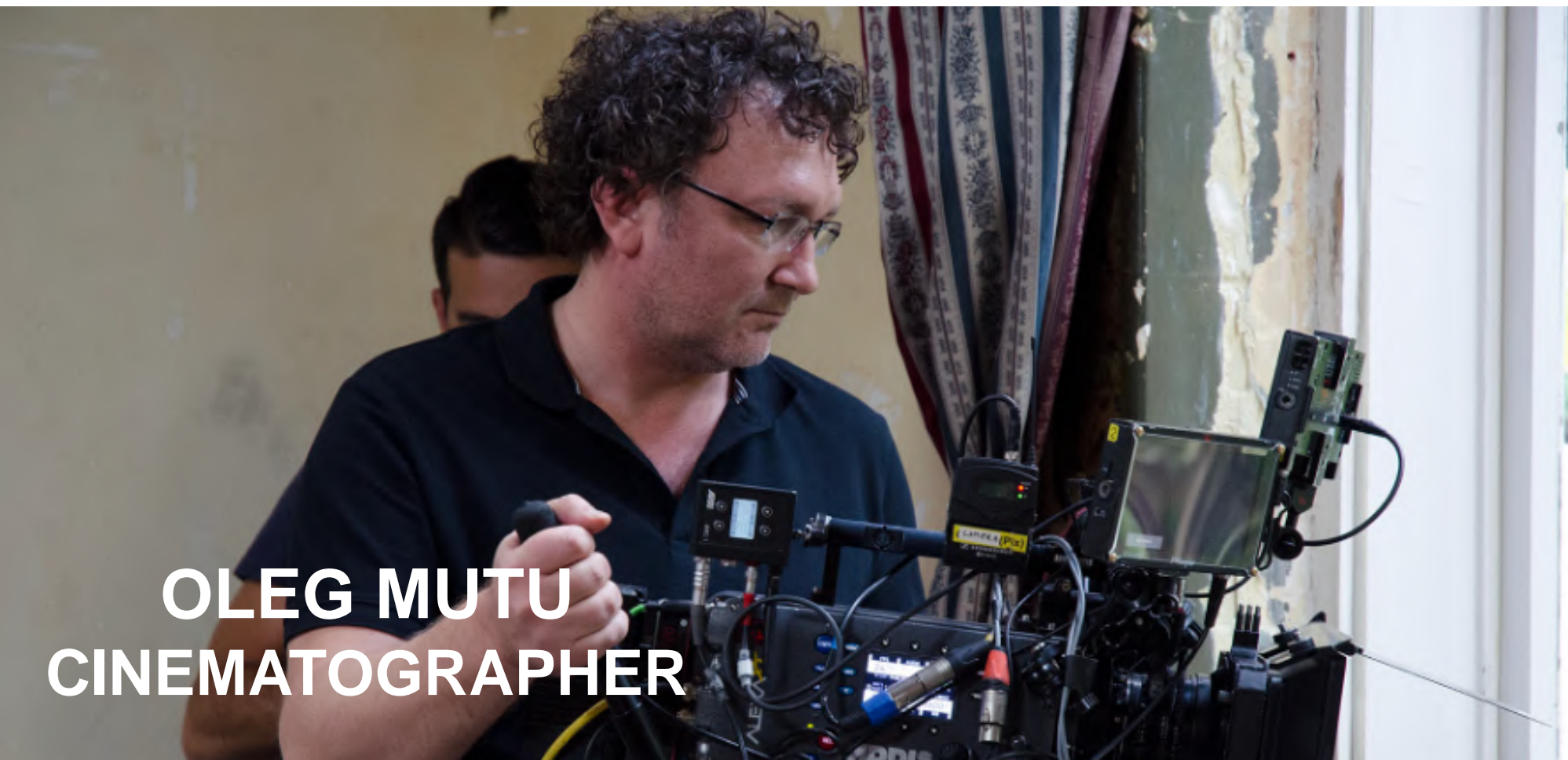
PRODUCER'S STATEMENT:

The story told in Panopticon is not just important for the Georgian society today, it is also relevant to many other countries at the moment. Strong currents of nationalism, Fascism and religious intolerance, and just intolerance against everything that is different have surfaced in many places and yet we tend to forget that the biggest effects of such movements can be seen in teenagers, as this vulnerable age is when a personality of an individual is shaped. This film is going to be precisely about this

I think, many young people might see Panopticon as a mirror, but I also think that this story goes beyond teenagers and touches those who have gone through a similar experience. In our society, and many others today, religion is used as a weapon that breeds hate against people who may choose to live differently from its indoctrinated path. We believe that with the hate you cannot build a bright, nice, harmonic future and we would like to invite viewers, especially young people to raise these questions and contemplate them together with us. Growing up in the USSR, I and my generation remember the limitations on our freedom, but now, a different set of limitations causes aggression among a growing part of a young generation in Georgia. Since the Collapse, the previously oppressed Orthodox Christian Church in Georgia has regained its control and some "believers" established themselves as a fundamentalist force and catalyst of conservative nationalistic values. Today, some young people and not only, are pressured to live by these values, which are also at the heart of the newly emerging Fascist organizations. This is very scary if we don't do anything.

VLADIMER KATCHARAVA





OLEG MUTU
CINEMATOGRAPHER

Oleg Mutu, is known for his work on **4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days** with Cristian Mungiu and **My Joy** with Sergei Loznitsa. Oleg's attention to detail and his humanist approach to capturing characters does justice to the story. Oleg's camera often leaves room for characters to exist, his lighting is naturalistic and organic to the world, which helps us dive into the story without thinking about the artifice of filmmaking.



PANOPTICON was developed as part of:

- Cannes Film Festival - The Residence, 2019
- Cannes Film Festival Pitching Forum
- Torino Script Lab, 2019 (Greece, Italy)
- Torino Feature Lab, 2020 (Online):
- Rotterdam International Film Festival (Cinemart):
- Sofia Meetings Pitching Sessions
- Torino Script Lab Pitching:
- Arras Film Days Pitching Award (France):
- Odessa Best Pitch Award (Ukraine):
- Cinemed Montpellier Film Festival Pitching Award (France):
- Transilvania Pitch Stop
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PRODUCTION COMPANIES

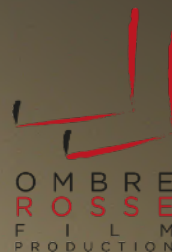


20 STEPS PRODUCTIONS

Address: 10a Sandro Akhmeteli St ZIP Code: 0159 City:
Tbilisi Country: Georgia Email: info@20steps.ge Phone:
+995 32 2520945 Producer: Vladimer Katcharava Email:
katcharava@20steps.ge Phone: +995 591 227 377

OMBRE ROSSE FILM PRODUCTION (co-producer)

Coproducer: Luca Cabriolu, Andrea Di Blasio
Address: Via Sonnino 195 ZIP Code: 09127 City:
Cagliari Country: Italy Email:
ombrossefilm@gmail.com Phone: +33 6 73 32 63 64



TANGAJ PRODUCTION (co-producer)

Coproducer: Anamaria Antoci
Address: Constantin Budisteanu 12-14, C1 Building,
apt. 11 ZIP Code: 010775 City: Bucharest Country:
Romania Email: anamaria@tangajproduction.com
Phone: +40 740 155 6



FILMO2 (co-producer)

Coproducer: Olivier Chantriaux, Luca Cabriolu.
Address: 22 boulevard du Jardin Zoologique, ZIP
Code: 13004 City: Marseille Country: France Email:
contact@filmo2.com
Phone: + 33 9 50 69 71 72 / +33 6 35 18 51 14



INDEPENDENT FILM PROJECT

Coproducer: Archil Gelovani
(co-producer) Address: Griboedov 29 City: Tbilisi
Country: Georgia Email: info@ifp.ge



2024 - Georgia, France, Italy, Romania - 95 min - DCP - Stereo or. 5.1 - Georgian (English Subtitles)

CONTACTS

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A FILM BY **GEORGE SIKHARULIDZE**

20 STEPS PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH FILMO2, TANGAJ PRODUCTION, OMBRE ROSSE FILM PRODUCTION, INDEPENDENT FILM PROJECT

STARRING **DATA CHACHUA**, **IA SUKHITASHVILI**, **MALKHAZ ABULADZE**, **MARITA MESKHORADZE**, **VAKHTANG KEBELADZE**, **SALOME GELENIDZE**, **ANDRO JAPARIDZE**, **KETEVAN SHERVASHIDZE**

WITH THE SUPPORT OF **GEORGIAN NATIONAL FILM CENTER**, **AIDE AUX CINÉMAS DU MONDE**, **CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE - INSTITUT FRANÇAIS**, **RÉGION ÎLE-DE-FRANCE**, **MIC - DIREZIONE GENERALE CINEMA E AUDIOVISIVO**, **ROMANIAN FILM CENTRE**

ENTERPRISE GEORGIA, **FILM IN GEORGIA**, **ROMANIAN TELEVISION**, **CHAINSAW EUROPE** CASTING **EKA CAST** COSTUME DESIGNER **KETEVAN KALANDADZE** PRODUCTION DESIGNER **KETEVAN NADIBADZE** SOUND DESIGNER **ALEXANDRU DUMITRU** RE-RECORDING MIXER **PAOLO SEGAT** CO-PRODUCER **CHIARA COSTANZA** EDITOR **GIORGIA VILLA** DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **OLEG MUTU**

LIVE PRODUCER **VLADIMIR CHIKHRADZE** CO-PRODUCERS **LUCA CABRIOLU**, **ANDREA DI BLASIO**, **ANAMARIA ANTOCI**, **OLIVIER CHANTRIAUX**, **ARCHIL GELOVANI**, **SERGEY YANONTOV**

PRODUCER **VLADIMIR KATCHARAVA**

