

CURE (*Girls*)

Inspired by a true story



A Film by Andrea Štaka

Produced by Okofilm Productions, Zurich
Živa Produkcija, Zagreb

February 2011



SYNOPSIS

Tanja and Eni are best friends. They are 14 years old and live in Dubrovnik: Eni with her mother and grandmother, Tanja with her father, with whom she has only recently moved back from Switzerland to Dubrovnik, their former hometown. Even though Tanja is “new” in town, the two girls are inseparable. Like with all normal teenage girls, this doesn’t mean they aren’t often drawn into fierce arguments.

On a warm spring day, they decide to wander into the forbidden forest at Petka hill. While walking, they talk about their first experiences with boys. They laugh and argue, and they make plans for a mutual future far away. At the edge of a cliff, a sexually tense moment arises and the girls have an argument with horrific consequences. Eni is left for dead hanging in the rocks above the sea, while Tanja spends the night wandering aimlessly through the forest. However, the inhabitants of Dubrovnik don’t want to know about the desolation and guilt plaguing Tanja after her friend’s accident. Tanja gets lured deeper and deeper into the Dubrovnik universe, which gradually unfolds in front of her eyes; The sunny, Mediterranean harbour town now seems sinister and full of secrets. Tanja finds herself alone and turns to Eni’s mother and grandmother, who strangely treat her as if she were Eni. Her life gradually becomes interwoven with that of her friend lying in hospital; step by step she seems to penetrate further and further into Eni’s life, taking over her identity as if the two friends were mysteriously merging... When Eni unexpectedly returns home, Tanja cannot deal with losing her new role in Eni’s family. Eni on the other hand seems strangely detached and turns away from Tanja, letting her feel that she is an outsider. The events grow so acute, that the former friendship between the two girls culminates in a second incident on the cliff, with even more horrific consequences.

CURE is inspired by a true story that happened in the early 1990s. The feature film combines elements of drama, mystery and coming-of-age genres. The real location of Dubrovnik, with its turbulent and sometimes tragic history and its architectural contrasts – from the medieval Old Town to the still bombed-out remains of socialist-realist hotels – plays an important role in setting the mood of the story. In this harbour town, where for centuries women waited for their men to return from work at sea,

CURE delves into the ambivalent world of a teenage girls' friendship. The story is told realistically at first, but increasingly lures the viewer into a state of uncertainty; slowly but surely the viewer succumbs to the same mysterious spell that the protagonists find themselves unable to escape from.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Dubrovnik is not only the location of the original story that inspired this project, but also my second hometown where I spent summer holidays at my grandmother's as a child. I have a love-hate relationship to the place; my childhood connection, a fascination with its beauty, family ties and ambivalence about its history.

A few years ago, I heard the story about two girls going to pick asparagus on Petka Hill and never returning home. The next day they were found; one dead, the other alive. The surviving girl never said what had happened that day. The dead girl's father thinks it was murder. The police shelved the case.

Many of Dubrovnik's inhabitants never heard the story. In 1993, shortly after the war in Croatia, many were still living in countries like Italy, Switzerland or the US, where they had found shelter during the bombing of the town. What really happened that spring day? As I tried to find out more about the incident, the story kept shifting, its narrators adding or changing details. I was increasingly drawn into the dark universe of Dubrovnik and its everyday life; dominant women, missing men, fragile relationships, jealousy and love. I started to wonder whether the story had actually happened at all.

My intention is to use this simple fact divers to build a subjective universe containing these elements; girls' obsessions, family webs, fear of death, intrigues, secrets, as well as subtle variations on cruelty and violence – set where the Balkans meet the Mediterranean sea.



DIRECTOR'S PROFILE

Director Andrea Štaka grew up in Switzerland but has close ties to Dubrovnik, where part of her family still lives. In her documentary *Yugodivas* (2000) and her award-winning first feature film *Fräulein* (2006) she explored aspects of Balkan women's identities as well as the theme of female friendship. She is co-founder of Okofilm Productions and is based in Zurich.

COMPANY PROFILES

Okofilm Productions was founded in 2007 by the internationally acclaimed directors Andrea Štaka and Thomas Imbach, with the aim of producing independent and artistically ambitious films for theatrical release. Okofilm is based in Zurich, Switzerland and collaborates with international partners on both production and distribution. Oko's films are targeted for A-list festivals and international art house distribution.

Okofilm is currently producing three new projects. *Cure (Girls)*, (in financing) is the new feature film project by Andrea Štaka. Her previous film *Das Fräulein* (2006) won the Golden Leopard in Locarno and the Heart of Sarajevo for Best Film and Actress. *Day Is Done*, Thomas Imbach's documentary auto-fiction, will premiere at the Berlinale in February 2011. His new feature film based on the life of Mary Stuart *Mary's Ride* is currently in financing/preproduction.

Producer: Thomas Imbach

Produkcija Živa (Production) is an independent film production company based in Zagreb, Croatia. It came into existence out of the necessity for an independent explorative journey through the arts. Founded by the actor/producer Leon Lučev and producer Damir Ibrahimović, out of the need to continue their creative collaboration, the company started work during the production of feature film *Grbavica* (Berlin Winner 2006). The close relationship with Sarajevo-based production company *Deblokada* resulted in a realization of a number of artistic projects and professional workshops, which was further developed during the production of the feature film *On the Path* by Jasmila Žbanić. After co-producing the feature film *Na Putu* (On the Path) in 2008, Živa Produkcija has three films in development: the animated feature film *Edo Maajka*, the feature film – *Love Island* by Jasmila Žbanić and feature film – *Cure (Girls)* by Andrea Štaka.

CURE is a coproduction with ZDF, Das kleine Fernsehspiel/ARTE. The teamwork between Andrea Štaka and Christian Cloos from Das Kleine Fernsehspiel goes back to Štaka's feature film *Fräulein* (2006), where they worked together creatively and successfully.

DISTRIBUTION

We would also like to continue our valuable collaboration with distribution companies we have built a relationship with releasing *Fräulein*: such as Blitz Film, Croatia/Bosnia/Serbia, Cines Verdi, Spain, Film Movement, USA and Poly Film, Austria.

In Switzerland we work with Hélène Cardis and Pathé film distribution. Okofilm is proud to be associated with a company known for its network across Europe and its distinguished film programme.

