



Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival
Crystal Globe Competition

2010
SOUL FOOD
INTERNATIONAL SALES COMPANY

AS FAR AS I CAN WALK

(STRAHINJA BANOVIĆ)

directed by STEFAN ARSENIJEVIĆ



SYNOPSIS

Strahinja and his wife, Ababuo, both 28, left Ghana at the beginning of the migrant crisis. They managed to reach Germany but were deported back to Belgrade.

Serbia may not be Germany, but Strahinja does his best to start a new life. He works hard to secure asylum, trying out as a football player for a local club and working as a volunteer for the Red Cross. The process, however, is lengthy and Ababuo, a passionate woman aspiring to become an actress in London, feels unfulfilled in their life.

One night, a new group of Syrian refugees arrive, on their way to Western Europe. One of them is Ali, a charismatic left-wing activist. Ababuo initially mocks him, but, the very next day, leaves Serbia with him, providing no explanation. Strahinja sets off along the Balkan migrant route for completely different reasons than anyone else: for love.

A reimagining of the medieval Serbian epic poem Banovich Strahinja in which contemporary African migrants take the place of Serbian national heroes. Urgent and timeless at the same time, this adaptation raises questions about identity, tradition, race and love.

TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/556196349>

Serbia / Luxembourg / France / Bulgaria / Lithuania / 2021 / Drama / 92'
Languages: English, Serbian Subtitles: English



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CAST & CREW

Cast:

IBRAHIM KOMA
NANCY MENSAH-OFFEI
MAXIM KHALIL
RAMI FARAH
NEBOJŠA DUGALIĆ

Directed by: STEFAN ARSENIJEVIĆ
Screenplay by: STEFAN ARSENIJEVIĆ, BOJAN VULETIĆ, NICOLAS DUCRAY
Director of Photography: JELENA STANKOVIĆ
Production design: ZORANA PETROV
Edited by: VANJA KOVAČEVIĆ
Costume designer: CARINE RANDO DE FELICE
Make-up artist: SOPHIE GARLINSKAS
Sound Designer: ZORAN MAKSIMOVIĆ
Sound Recordist: OLIVIER DANDRÉ
Composer: MARTYNAS BIALOBŽESKIS

Production companies:

Art & Popcorn (Serbia)
Les Films Fauves (Luxembourg)
Surprise Alley (France)
Chouchkov Brothers (Bulgaria)
ArtBox (Lithuania)

Producer:

MIROSLAV MOGOROVIĆ

Co-producers:

GILLES CHANIAL
ALICE ORMIÈRES & MYRINA MANÉ
BORISLAV CHOCHKOV
KESTUTIS DRAZDAUSKAS
Associate Co-producers:
IVICA VIDANOVIĆ & NEVENA SAVIĆ
Executive producer:
STEFAN MLADENOVIĆ

With the support of:

Eurimages, Film Center Serbia, Film Fund Luxembourg, CNC France, Bulgarian National Film Centre, Lithuanian Film Center, Creative Europe - MEDIA

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Stefan Arsenijević, writer and director, was born in Belgrade (Serbia) in 1977. Graduated Film and TV Directing from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade, where he now teaches film directing at the master's level.

His short film "(A)torsion" (2003) won over 30 national and international awards, including the Golden Bear at Berlinale, the European Film Academy Award, and the Oscar nomination.

Directed a short film in omnibus "Lost and Found" (opening film of Berlinale Forum 2005).

Stefan's first feature "Love and Other Crimes" premiered at Berlinale Panorama Special in 2008 and won several awards at international festivals. With director Bojan Vuletić, he co-wrote "Practical Guide to Belgrade with Singing and Crying" (Karlov Vary IFF 2011).

Program Manager of Goethe Institute's professional training program for Southeast European film directors FIRST FILMS FIRST since 2015. Member of the European Film Academy. "As Far as I Can Walk" is his second feature film.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

At the heart of our film is something very intimate. A love story. A stubborn, unusual, and beautiful love story. A story of a man who will go against the rules of society and risk everything for love.

My hometown Belgrade was one of the hot spots on the so-called Balkan migrant route. Every day, thousands of refugees were reaching Serbia in what was considered the biggest refugee crisis after the Second World War.

It was emotionally striking to see these lost and exhausted people wandering around town. Some were poor, some even wealthy, but most of them were middle class, educated, and urban. People like me. Some were numb and quiet, others full of adrenaline, tense and restless. In common to them all, however, was the fear of what would happen next.

At the same time, I considered doing a modern interpretation of one of the most important Serbian traditional epics, the medieval poem "Strahinja Banović". It occurred to me: what if in the new adaptation the Serbian national hero was a young African migrant? What kind of impact would that have on our understanding of national heritage and identity?

With truly wonderful and dedicated actors and crew, we were determined to connect two quite different worlds: a traditional Serbian and a modern migrant, hoping to get a new and deeper understanding of both. We received invaluable support from migrants in the refugee camps of Serbia who shared their experiences with us and were cast as extras and for small roles in the film.

The character of Strahinja Banović in our film was inspired by Ibrahim Ishak, a young man from Ghana who lives in a refugee camp of Krnjača. Just like Strahinja in the film, Ibrahim filed for asylum and is still waiting for an interview with the Serbian administration. As he is undocumented, Ibrahim is not authorized to work and, thus, is volunteering for the Red Cross. He is also practicing with the local football club, but he won't be able to play officially until he is granted asylum. However, Ibrahim is optimistic and enthusiastic about staying in Serbia.

The determination to find a better and safer life which I have witnessed not only with Ibrahim but with many migrants I met during the shoot reflects in Strahinja's quest for love. Both are driven by something inherently human and existential that doesn't let them shy away from danger and uncertainty. For me, this is as close as it can get to a modern-day equivalent of the grand quests of epic heroes.







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