

About

In a time of no-thrill traveling, where taking a plane is like taking the bus, and in a culture that supports us to find our place everywhere under the sun, FIRST OF ALL FELICIA talks about the alienated condition of a 40 year old woman who believed to have followed her passion and now doesn't know anymore where she belongs.

We are on Felicia's departure day (after the two week annual visit to her family in Bucharest): Felicia starts packing too late, mother offers an elaborate breakfast, and father fears that he will not live another year to see his daughter again. As time is tight, they decide to take a cab, instead of letting Iulia drive her older sister to the airport.

As the taxi drives through the jammed streets of Bucharest, Felicia and her mother realize they will never be in time for the flight.

While trying to rebook her ticket, Felicia is confronted with her two families (her ex-husband, expecting her to come back in time in order to pick up their child from a summer camp - and her father and sister, who are both trying to be helpful in their peculiar ways). All this, and the disrupted communication with her mother, slowly reveal the ordeal Felicia had to go through in the last 19 years of separation from her family. It is apparently about love, unspoken feelings, but also about power games and edges.

In order to choose between the many options she has to fly back, Felicia has to balance properly her budget, her comfort, her responsibility towards her son, her time and her unspoken wish to stay one more day at home.

Cast

Ozana Oancea – actress

Long term engagements with theatres in Romania offered her the chance to act in plays that toured extensively all over the world and brought her national best actress awards.

Film credits include Romanian productions “The Dream House” (directed by Ioan Carmazan), “Red Rats” (directed by Florin Codre), a small part in “Adam Ressurrected” directed by Paul Schrader and the lead role in “First of All, Felicia”, written and directed by Razvan Radulescu and Melissa de Raaf.

Since 2001, Ozana Oancea has also been a freelance producer,

translator, events coordinator, project developer and international relations responsible for film and theatre festivals such as Transylvania International Film Festival, NexT International Short and Medium Length Film Festival, Craiova International Shakespeare Festival, National Theatre Festival, Romania on the Movie Map.

Ileana Cernat – actress

An actress for over 44 years, Ileana Cernat has had the chance to experience on stage all kinds of roles, from Shakespeare to Goldoni and Beaumarchais, passing through all the major Romanian playwrights, which brought her several „Best Actress” awards. Her first appearance in a film was in 1963 (“You Are Guilty Too” directed by Mircea Muresan). She was also cast in a series of TV shows, some of which received national awards. For several years she has been collaborating with two radio stations, both as an actress in children plays and as a theatre critic.

Crew

Răzvan Rădulescu

(RO,1969) studied Literature and Opera Directing in Bucharest. He wrote two novels and worked as an art director for magazines. In 1999 he started to write for films, among which the award winning “Stuff and Dough” (Cristi Puiu), “Niki and Flo” (Lucian Pintilie), “The Paper will be Blue” and “Boogie” (Radu Muntean) and the internationally acclaimed “The Death of Mr. Lazarescu” (Cristi Puiu). He also worked as a script consultant for Cristian Mungiu’s “4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days”.

Melissa de Raaf

(NL, 1976) currently studies art theory, philosophy and media art at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe, Germany. She is an independent curator of experimental film programs and exhibitions in the Netherlands, Germany and Russia and she cooperates with visual artists, film- and documentary-makers on productions as writer and director. She wrote several scripts (“Shelter”, directed by Dragomir Sholev, “Clean”, directed by Sylvie Michel Cassey).

Dana Bunescu

combined her editor and sound skills for most of her projects, working along the years with some of the most important Romanian directors: Cristi Puiu (sound and editor for his short film “Cigarettes and Coffee” and

editor for “The Death of Mr Lazarescu”), Alexandru Solomon (sound for The Great Communist Bank Robbery), Cristian Nemescu (sound editor for California Dreamin’), Cristian Mungiu (sound and editing for “4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days” and his most recent project “Tales from the Golden Age”).

Tudor Lucaciu, RSC

is a close collaborator of director Radu Muntean, with whom he started working in 2002 to his debut feature The Rage, as a camera operator. For Muntean’s next films – “The Paper Will Be Blue” (2006) and “Boogie” (2008) – Lucaciu was the director of photography. He also worked as DoP or camera operator for foreign productions shot in Romania (“Boudica”, “The Detonator”, “7 Seconds”).

Cristina Iliescu

graduated from the film directing department of MEDIA University and since 2003 she has been working as a first assistant director for major Romanian productions (“Cold Waves” by Alexandru Solomon, “The Happiest Girl in the World” by Radu Jude, “Hello, how are you?” directed by Alex Maftei) or for foreign films shot or co-produced with Romania (“Mirrors” by Alexandre Aja, “Borat” by Larry Charles, “Adam Resurrected” by Paul Schrader, “Mar Nero” by Federico Bondi).

Sorin & Carmen Dima

both graduated from the National Fine Art Academy and have been working as set decorator, costume designer, art director and production designer for commercials and music videos and for a series of important Romanian films (The Paper Will be Blue and Boogie by Radu Muntean). The both worked for international productions: Sorin’s credits include “Beowulf”, “Aliens in the Wild, Wild West”, “The Last Drop”; Carmen was a set decorator for Joel Schumacher’s “Town Creek”, Costa Gavras’ “Amen” and Claude Lelouch’s “Ces amours là”.

Titi Fleancu

has been fulfilling various positions in the sound department, from boom operator and sound recordist to sound editor and sound mixer for more than 12 years. He has worked with a large number of directors and his long list of credits include films by Radu Jude (The Happiest Girl in the World), Alexandru Solomon (Cold Waves), Calin Netzer (Maria), Adrian Sitaru (Hooked), Cristi Puiu (The Death of Mr Lazarescu), Cristian Mungiu (4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days).

Mălina Ionescu

After a diploma in foreign languages, Malina got a second one in fine arts, in the photo-video department of the National Arts University. She was a costume designer for several Romanian short films (“Networking Friday” by Razvan Radulescu & Melissa de Raaf, “Tiger Danny” by Radu Potcoava, “Lord & The Cage” by Adrian Sitaru). As a visual artist, she was part of Creation Station project (a visual arts platform) and has had two photo exhibitions of her own. She won a national Best Experimental Short Film with her project Romanian Wear Plastic Bags.

The music

Bring Back My Yesterday

Written & performed by Glen Campbell
Recording Capitol Records Nashville
Copyright EMI Songs International

Marche pour la Cérémonie des Turcs

L’Orchestre du Roi Soleil
Written by Jean Baptiste Lully
Performed by Jordi Savall, Le Concert des Nations
Copyright Alia-Vox, Paris

Hotel

Written & performed by DJ Project
Copyright Media Services Romania 2008

Alphabet

Written by J.S. Bach / A. Monn
Arranged by Mats Björklund / Ch.Ricanek / R.Pietsch / H.Faltermeyer
Lyrics by Amanda Lear
Performed by Amanda Lear
(P) 1977 BMG Ariola München GmbH
Courtesy of NOVA MUSIC in ROMANIA

Prelude & Fugue no 5

24 Preludes and Fugues
Written & performed by Dmitri Shostakovich
Copyright Editions Le Chant du Monde, Paris

Statements

Răzvan Rădulescu

The title is, in a way, misleading. Time is the main character of "First of all, Felicia". Secret, discrete or continuous and certainly elusive. It serves as a quiet frame for all our major choices, dissects through memories, blurs understanding and fiercely fuels our anger. I witnessed many times people close to each other trying to overcome the gap put in between them by time (space doesn't matter, really) and their torment broke my heart. They were debating old choices and irreversible consequences as if there was still a possibility to take them back. They were doing this with a violence that endangered the very love they were looking for. I did the same, myself, many times. We tried, in "Felicia", to manipulate time through any means available, in order to show the underpinnings of emotions. There is no coldness in this approach, just the due amount of stupor and awe.

Melissa de Raaf

Parents and their grown-up children attract and repulse each other like magnets: even though they can't find in their relation love and happiness to the full extent, there is always a longing for precisely that. We've asked ourselves: How come what one mean to be a loving gesture isn't perceived by the other as such? There is a chronic sense of failure in how the communication codes go different for both parties involved. I am fascinated by this fight for affection, powered by inner strife and melancholy - it has a touch of heroism.

Ozana Oancea - actress

Felicia goes shopping in Utrecht.

A few days before the shooting started, Melissa and I embarked on a one week trip Bucharest-Berlin (technical stop)-Utrecht-Berlin (technical stop)-Bucharest. Each of us dragging her young child by the hand (or carrying them, at times), we travelled by plane, train and bus and shopped for all Felicia's belongings – her yellow suitcase, her multicolored coat, her brown boots, skirt, cardigan, her blue sleepwear, her contact lenses, muesli, magazines, everything. We ended up tired and loaded wandering through the deserted streets of Soest (a little town where Felicia lives), looking for the public library – which we considered

being Felicia's workplace. We found it, finally. Empty. Silent. A good place, after all...

Ileana Cernat - actress

After I read the script I was thrilled. The dialogue was powerful, full of nuances and loaded with conflict. I was thrilled even before I found out that I would play the complicated part of Felicia's mother. After the casting I found out who were the authors of the script: Razvan Radulescu and Melissa de Raaf, at the same time writers and directors of the film, with whom I enjoyed working very much. Actually, I enjoyed every working day with the whole team. I can say that one of my dreams came true, a dream spread on two summer months. The final scene, overwhelmingly dramatic, where the passive collision between the two worlds takes place, was a moment of pure magic on the set. I asked God for a miracle and I received two: a part of an ordinary but complicated mother (in the film) and a less ordinary grandmother (in real life).

Dana Bunescu - editing

I joined the crew of "First of All, Felicia" because I wanted to get to know Razvan, about whom I already knew so much. The experience met my expectations and Melissa was a pleasant surprise. I enjoyed very much working with both directors and I believe they make an incredible team, who created a wonderful film.

Titi Fleancu - sound

For me, this was a challenging and diverse experience: the shooting began with the interior location, then we crossed Bucharest from one end to the other on a platform and in the end we spent three weeks in a fully functional airport, where the voices of two actors had to cover the daily uproar of thousands of real tourists.

Malina Ionescu - costumes

I am very fond of First of All, Felicia. I liked the script from the very beginning and work becomes pleasure when you work with directors who have a very clear vision of what they want from that film. Before and during the shooting I was always somewhat afraid that I would do something wrong and ruin the atmosphere of the film a little.

Cristina Iliescu - 1st A.D.

For a whole month we tried to help Felicia leave her parents and get back to her home in the Netherlands, but Razvan and Melissa tricked her every day that there were no more available flights, so in the end

she stayed with us.

Carmen & Sorin Dima - set designers

Working with the two directors was easy and harmonious. They knew how to share their vision about the sets and the props to the slightest detail. The stress they put all the time on the set design challenged us to come up with the best ideas and solutions to create the atmosphere they were looking for.

Producing First of All, Felicia

HiFilm Productions

Founded 5 years ago, HiFilm has won almost 50 prizes around the world in major festivals as Berlinale, Sundance, Locarno, San Francisco, Los Angeles AFI, Zinebi Bilbao & participated in major festivals as Cannes, IDFA, Goteborg, Thessaloniki, Visions du Réel Nyon and so on. Among the productions of HiFilm one can find co-productions with France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Netherlands, Belgium, Croatia, Luxembourg and the list is open for our future projects.

HiFilm's current objective is to find co-producers for its projects in development & in pre-production, sell its projects as well as to find film projects that need a Romanian partner. We are also looking for films to be shot in Romania - taking advantage of the very competitive prices here as well as of the great variety of locations our country can offer.

Ada Solomon - producer

Media is bombing us with major problems being them political or social, extraordinary events, but we finally live our life at a "minor" level, an ordinary one and the everyday life problems of our society are forgotten or considered as uninteresting. I strongly believe they are much more interesting for us as individuals.

I'm trying to make films that make people react and maybe -ideally- help them improve their life / their relationships or at least discover the reality around them.

Unlimited

A French based production company with European share-holders, Unlimited co-produces documentaries and fiction features all over the world, striving to promote cinematic writing and to discover new talents. The most recent co-productions include „Between Two Worlds” by

Vimukthi Jayasundara (France-Sri Lanka), "First of All, Felicia" by Razvan Radulescu et Mélissa de Raaf (Roumania-France-Belgium-Croatia), "The Day Will Come" by Susanne Schneider (Germany-France), "China Is Still Far Away" by Malek Bensmail (France-Algeria), "Teza" by Haile Gériama (Ethiopia-Germany-France).

Philippe Avril - producer

The claustrophobia of familial intimacy is one of the most universal emotional realities, as recognizable for a Romanian as for a Mexican or a Californian. This is what stunned me upon reading the razor-sharp script for this film and, once again, upon seeing Razvan and Melissa's directorial work. Entomologists of the real, they have an unerring eye for the ways in which things get caught and twisted, delayed and deformed in the crevices and recesses of everyday existence, phenomena which they study from a distance, without pathos or complaisance. First of All, Felicia is an open heart surgery, surgery on a sort of maternal abcess. It's a film in which people talk all the time, but their words rarely connect, which makes it a terrifying mirror of our times. Thanks to Arte France Cinema and Unlimited, this production also belongs to France a little – and we are proud of it. The recognition which drew us into the project - that of a very strong voice, which speaks in a new tone (another new tone!) for Romanian cinema - was not proved wrong (not in the least!) by the final result.

FraKas

After several years of taking part in international co-productions, Jean-Yves Roubin and Michel Dutry decided to create FraKas, a production platform which casts, together with the young filmmakers it supports, an sharp glance on the contemporary society by means of penetrating and ambitious projects. In 3 years, FraKas produced and co-produced a dozen of short films, most of which were presented and awarded all around the world. In 2009, FraKas co-produced „Sans Rancune!”, Yves Hanchar's debut feature, and „First of All, Felicia”, the debut feature of Razvan Radulescu and Melissa de Raaf. At the moment, two new co-productions are in production and four features are in development. At the same time, Christine Parisse and Jean-Marie Musique joined the company in order to develop the Animation segment, in collaboration with „La Fabrique d'Images”, a Luxembourg based company. FraKas is a member of UPPF (Union of Francophone Film Producers).

Jean-Yves Roubin - producer

My involvement in this project came from the desire to work with Ada

Solomon on a feature that I was developing at the time. In her turn, Ada sent me the script of *First of All, Felicia*, by Melissa de Raaf and Razvan Radulescu. I knew Razvan mainly as the scriptwriter of *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu*. I took the script on the train to Paris; when I got off, I had read two thirds of it. During the 4 or 5 meetings I had for the day, all I could think about was finishing the script. *First of All, Felicia* is the typical kind of project that gives you the urge to produce films...

Kinorama

Kinorama is a Zagreb-based production company specialized in film production, founded in 2003. 2009 was a busy year for Kinorama: it produced *The Blacks*, feature directed by Zvonimir Juric and Goran Devic (developed at CineLink and EAVE), *Tulum*, a short film directed by Dalibor Matanic (awarded for the best directing at national short film festival and premiered internationally at Critic's Week in Cannes 2009) and co-produced *First of All, Felicia* by Razvan Radulescu and Melissa de Raaf. Both *The Blacks* and *First of All, Felicia* will premiere in the competition of Sarajevo Film Festival 2009. At present, Kinorama is developing some new projects and planning the production of 2 feature films this year. Some of the most promising young directors as well as some already recognized and respected Croatian film-makers are attached to our company. As we are also eager to co-produce, we are always present at international co-production markets, both looking for partners for our projects and trying to find interesting ones.

Ankica Jurić Tilić - producer

It is not easy to define if I was attracted to this project because I liked and admired Ada, Melissa and Razvan or because I liked the story so much. When I first read *First of all, Felicia*, the script was still in development, but it was written in such subtle and smart way, that I liked it immediately. I also liked the energy that the writers/directors and the producers were putting into it to make it happen. They did it in such an honest way, that I was tempted to join and I enjoyed every single moment of our collaboration. I'm proud to be a small part of this beautiful film.

Technical Data

Original title: Felicia inainte de toate

English title: First of All, Felicia

Duration: 120 min

Original support: 35 mm

Ratio: 1:1,85

FPS: 24

Sound: Dolby Digital (5.1)

Language: Romanian, Dutch

Year of production: 2009

Country of production: Romania