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# EDITORIAL

## SEVEN YEARS OLD: THE AGE OF REASON?

For the last 7 years, Série Series has been presenting European series, be they completed or in the making, with passion, enthusiasm and conviction. Our aim: that European creators can exchange, learn and discover, freely and enthusiastically, the methods and content of their counterparts across Europe.

In 2018, as always, the selection - made by the Série Series team and editorial committee – introduced a variety of remarkable productions, led by the vision of their creative teams, with authentic stories anchored in a generous and open Europe, that are reflective of a multicultural society that continues to ask questions.

More than a hundred speakers came in 2018 to exchange and share their successes, their methods, but also their doubts and questions. These discussions add to the rich fabric of Série

Series and we are happy to share these with you through these proceedings, which, we hope, transcribe the core of the sessions that took place in Fontainebleau from 26th to 28th June 2018. Year after year, our reports create an overall picture of what European creation is; open and accessible to all. We hope you find them useful.

We are proud of the creative abundance that these three days represent. They are filled with and enriched by such a variety of perceptions of the world, of visions of creation and of views on our society. We are proud of the enthusiasm that these exchanges engender and that they gather as many talents through a common desire to tell a story and share it with the public.



## THE SERIES

As a pioneer and observer of trends in terms of European creation, Série Series offers an annual round up of European series, with screenings of recent original series as well sessions centred around projects that are in production (*In The Pipeline*) or in development (*What's Next?*).

Because creation and creators are at the very heart of Série Series, each series is presented by its creative team (screenwriters, directors, producers, composers, broadcasters, actors...), who decode the creative methods and process.

For four years, Série Series has also facilitated the exposure of projects that are in their initial stages with the *Spotlight on Trailers* by Série Series.

A new addition this year were the *Follow Up* sessions, which allowed the public and professionals to discover the first episode of series that were presented last year whilst they were still in production. This allows people to follow series and their creative teams on a long term basis.

Finally, with the birth of Série Series Kids, a new showcase was created for children's series and their creators, enabling them to exchange directly with their audience.

# A VERY ENGLISH SCANDAL

United Kingdom



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## A CONVERSATION WITH STEPHEN FREARS AND DOMINIC TREADWELL-COLLINS

*A Very English Scandal*, BBC One's three-episode miniseries which aired last May, is based on a shocking true story. In 1961, the leader of the Liberal party, Jeremy Thorpe (played by Hugh Grant), starts a relationship with a young, psychologically fragile man, Norman Scott (played by Ben Whishaw). The liaison between the two men quickly turns sour and becomes public after Scott goes to the tabloids. Jeremy Thorpe always denied ever having a relationship with Scott. The case took a dark turn in 1975. Scott became the victim of attempted murder and he accused his ex-lover. Investigators were unable to clearly trace the evidence back to Jeremy Thorpe. In 1979, he resigned from the Liberal party and was tried at the Old Bailey for conspiracy and incitement to murder Norman Scott. Due to a lack of evidence, he was acquitted and remained officially innocent until his death, in 2014.

**Sex, lies and power**  
Dominic Treadwell-Collins had never heard of this scandal. He had just joined Blueprint Pictures (after having worked for the BBC

for several years) when he was handed a copy of a book - called *A Very English Scandal* - written by John Preston. That same evening, he read it cover to cover. The story was absolutely bewildering, both irresistibly funny and tragic, and he saw the potential for a great series. As Blueprint Pictures had assigned the development of the project to him, he was eager to reach out to Russell T. Davies, known for having revived *Doctor Who* in 2005 and for creating series such as *Queer as Folk* as well as *Cucumber* and *Banana*. Claiming to be «too busy», the screenwriter declined on the spot. However, Dominic Treadwell-Collins refused to back down and sent him a copy of the book. Two days later, Russell T. Davies rang him back and accepted - no screenwriter, however busy they may be, could let the opportunity of working on such an irresistible story pass them by.

As Stephen Frears is older than Dominic Treadwell-Collins, he remembers the case vividly. It had caused quite the stir at the time. Blueprint Pictures therefore had little trouble convincing him, especially seeing as

### SPEAKERS

**Stephen Frears**, director  
**Dominic Treadwell-Collins**, producer,  
Blueprint Pictures

### CHAIRED BY

**Tone C. Rønning**, executive producer, NRK  
**Hervé Hadmar**, screenwriter and director

### CREDITS

Original idea: Adapted from John Preston's novel *A Very English Scandal: Sex, Lies and a Murder Plot at the Heart of the Establishment*  
Screenwriter: Russell T. Davies  
Director: Stephen Frears  
Composer: Murray Gold  
Production: Blueprint Television  
Executive Producers: Dominic Treadwell-Collins, Graham Broadbent, Pete Czernin, Diarmuid McKeown, Russell T. Davies, Stephen Frears, Lucy Richer  
Broadcaster: BBC One  
Distributor: Sony Pictures Television  
Cast: Starring Golden Globe® Nominee Hugh Grant (*Love Actually*), Ben Whishaw (*Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*), Alex Jennings (*The Lady in the Van*), Jonathan Hyde (*Titanic*), Eve Myles (*Torchwood*)  
Format: 3x60'  
Date of broadcast: 2018

the script was written by Russell T. Davies, who he finds "wonderful". After reading just three pages, he was already bursting out laughing. Not only was the story told in a brilliantly funny way, which corresponded exactly to how he had remembered it, but there were also certain moments that were introduced in a subtle and refined way, which made it a lot more emotional.

Dominic Treadwell-Collins feels like *A Very English Scandal* is a, albeit destructive, beautiful love story between two men. Which is why Stephen Frears was perfect for the series. Very few directors are able to take on this kind of story with such finesse. The scene where Jeremy Thorpe looks at himself in a mirror in utter silence before facing the flock of journalists that had come to interrogate him, is full of humanity. "The screenplay written by Russell T. Davies was incredible, both dynamic and extremely funny. Stephen Frears was able to make this story universal, making it an allegory for the human condition, and this, without forgetting the comedic undertone". Despite certain events (notably the failed attempted murder) seeming ridiculous, these are all true and affected real people, most of whom suffered greatly. Jeremy Thorpe's children are still alive. They are still defending their father.

With *A Very English Scandal*, Stephen Frears is somewhat in familiar territory. He previously has directed dramas based on real people, be it the Queen of England in *The Queen* or Tony Blair in *The Deal*. The process can at times be risky, particularly if certain protagonists are still alive. John Preston wrote his book after Jeremy Thorpe's death and would probably not have done it while he was alive. When Stephen Frears is dealing with real-life matters, he prohibits himself from thinking of the effect it might have on the people whose lives these are based on or their loved-ones. "Jeremy Thorpe's son is still alive. He still claims his father is innocent and the series will not change that. I do however understand that the series could have caused him pain. Honestly, I would not want to be in his situation". According to Stephen Frears, a director has only one responsibility: staying true to the character's reality. He does admit that the series does at points take some creative freedom. Although certain scenes were imagined (for example, the intimate moments between Jeremy Thorpe and his wife), the events themselves are very real.

Tone C. Rønning remarks that Jeremy Thorpe is seemingly the more comedic character. Whereas Norman Scott's is far more tragic. Stephen Frears agrees that the poor man went through an absolutely nightmare. Today he's 78 years old. For more than 30 years, he was accused of

being a liar. No-one took him seriously. The series, as Dominic Treadwell-Collins points out, has enabled him to rehabilitate himself, or at least to tell his version of events. "Finally, people are listening to Norman Scott and believing him". On this point, the British police have recently announced the possibility of the case being re-opened. With regards to Jeremy Thorpe, Dominic Treadwell-Collins admits that his character is often quite ridiculous. But, as of the third episode, thanks to the combined talents of Stephen Frears and Hugh Grant, one cannot help but feel empathy towards him, if not even sympathy.

A story like this would never have been told had it not been for the high calibre actors. Stephen Frears explains that he might not have accepted the project, regardless of the screenplay, had Hugh Grant refused to play Jeremy Thorpe. He had directed him previously in *Florence Foster Jenkins*. «Once you hired Hugh, you've laid the whole film out really». The actor fully invested himself in preparing for the role. "He even took violin lessons for 10 weeks", he adds. For Dominic Treadwell-Collins, this intense preparation was vital. "It is not him being an impersonation of Jeremy Thorpe; he kind of lived him. I think for now, because of the film, for a lot of people, Jeremy Thorpe is Hugh Grant".

Although Ben Whishaw is considered to be one of the most gifted actors of his generation, Stephen Frears had never met him prior to this project and was not well acquainted with his work. To ensure he would be true to the part, he set up a lunch, two days before the start of filming, with Norman Scott, to give him inspiration and guide his performance.

### Discussing method

Hervé Hadmar could not miss the opportunity to ask Stephen Frears about his work method. However, the director explains that he has no method. Despite what he might have heard, he is not an intellectual director. "You think I'm an auteur; it's all the fault of the French". If we had to sum up his method in one word, it would be: pragmatic.

Stephen Frears explains that he was unable to participate in the preparation of the series. Indeed, he was promoting his latest film, so once he arrived on the set of *A Very English Scandal*, he had no other choice but to fully trust the team and the work they had done. "I am not Stanley Kubrick", he says. He does not consider himself a one-man band, getting involved with everything on set. "I do not want to be responsible for all the aspects of a film". According to him, the director's main mission is to create a space where everyone – cast and crew – can best express their talent and creativity.





However, Stephen Frears admits to needing to feel secure. For example, he knew that the production used the best casting agents in the world. He had been assured, prior to filming, that he would be working with Danny Cohen, one of the greatest British directors of photography and his long-term work partner.

For a director, beyond the technical aspects of directing, the most important thing is to understand the script, to have fully grasped it. When he began working on *Dangerous Liaisons*, he knew practically nothing on the customs of French aristocracy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, let alone the literature and architecture of the time. He learnt on the job, surrounding himself with specialists, including an incredible team of designers. More importantly, he had a fantastic script (adapted from a play by Christopher Hampton, which was itself adapted from a famous epistolary novel by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos). Similarly, when he read the script for *A Very English Scandal*, he instantly knew the story should be told with a comedic tone, mainly because the events already seemed ridiculous to him back when it all unfolded in 1979. He recalls "schoolboys used to make jokes about it, it was so ridiculous". The main protagonists of this case became the laughing stock of the UK.

Based on Stephen Frears' description, it seems the set of *A Very English Scandal* was idyllic: "All the actors were confident. No-one was nervous on set and all the crew members knew exactly what they were doing". Once filming was finished, he was sure he had directed a very good series. Stephen Frears explains that all directors instinctively know whether they have created something worthwhile. Whether it will be a success is a different story. "We are always surprised, positive or negative". He was very proud of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, but had never imagined it would be such a worldwide success. The reaction to *A Very English Scandal* is far beyond what they had expected.

#### **Bringing controversy back to centre stage**

*A Very English Scandal* was aired on BBC One, three Sundays in a row during prime time. Tone C. Rønning asks Stephen Frears and Dominic Treadwell-Collins about their relationship with the British broadcasting giant. Dominic admits to knowing the Beeb very well, both its strengths and weaknesses. The channel has a tendency of getting, according to him, too involved in the development stage. Amazon, who coproduced the series and brought it to America, have a completely

different strategy whereby they leave total freedom to the creatives. The platform's only requirement was that the story would speak to an American audience. The BBC were far more demanding. For Dominic Treadwell-Collins, the BBC has become more fearful with time, less adventurous, whereas, for decades, it had been regarded as a channel that was not afraid of a scandal or of controversy, quite the opposite. They are afraid of being bombarded with viewer complaints. It's for this reason that he had to fight to keep the sex scenes in. "It's no big deal. I like fighting with the BBC, it's fun". The BBC ended up letting go, but only because Stephen Frears and Russell T. Davies were leading this project. Thankfully they did, in light of the series' huge success. Of course, they received some complaints, most of which were openly homophobic. Some viewers did not appreciate seeing two men kiss. As far as Stephen Frears is concerned, he has always loved controversy and every complaint, in his eyes, is a badge of honor.

#### **Television, a new eldorado for filmmakers**

Tone C. Rønning asks why the production team felt the need to pair up with Amazon. Dominic Treadwell-Collins explains that it essentially came down to financing. Budgets for series have exploded and the BBC can no longer finance them on its own. In reality, the budgets for series are becoming more and more like those for films. It is therefore no surprise that big names from the film industry (directors and actors alike) are now gravitating towards the small screen.

In the 1970s, Stephen Frears worked exclusively for British television which he left behind to focus on making films. He had on occasion returned to the small screen over the last two decades, but *A Very English Scandal* marks his official return to television. The director explains that the reason is solely opportunistic. Nowadays, Hollywood is putting everything into super hero movies. Paradoxically, despite the boom in blockbusters, the American film industry is in crisis. It is clear that television now has greater resources and therefore offers more opportunities to directors. Regardless, Stephen Frears is not choosing the small screen over the big screen. He did not accept to direct *A Very English Scandal* because it was for the BBC, but because the story, and the script that went with it, were incredible. The medium does not matter – television or cinema - as long as the subject matter is fascinating.

#### **Series, a reflection of the world**

On this point, Dominic Treadwell-Collins fears that the sheer quantity of series created today are a detriment to the quality. The supply is so abundant and certain programs are created without any common sense, just following trends. Television is in fashion, so you must create series at all cost. Dominic Treadwell-Collins recently logged in to Netflix. Despite the plethora of series on offer, none piqued his interest. Unfortunately, many series are made as simple consumer products. They are futile, cold and devoid of any humanity. They say absolutely nothing about the world we live in today. Whereas, for Dominic Treadwell-Collins, a series must, regardless of its genre, "ask questions on the human condition and, in a certain way, give the viewers faith in humanity", especially during the difficult times we are currently going through. Despite its title, *A Very English Scandal*'s themes – politics and power - are universal.

The story also offers a strong stance on homophobia, a subject that Stephen Frears has regularly broached in his films. The director recalls that the plot begins at the beginning of the 60s. As surprising as it may seem, homosexuality was still considered a crime in Great Britain and was only decriminalised in 1967. For years, homosexuals lived hidden away, in fear of being imprisoned. Some of Britain's greatest artists, including John Gielgud, were jailed! Stephen Frears felt it would be useful to show, at the start of the series, a poster that would explain the situation in Great Britain in the 60s to the viewer. Indeed, he thinks that "the younger viewers couldn't even imagine homosexuality being forbidden". This oppression explains most of the main protagonists' behaviours. During the conversation, Stephen Frears learns, to his horror, that homosexuality was decriminalised in 1981 in France. "The French are true savages", he concludes.

*A Very English Scandal* shows, with humour, the devastating effects a society of prohibitions can have. But more importantly, despite its title, a great universal story. To conclude the conversation, Stephen Frears advises: "for a good story you need two ingredients: sex and corruption. Everything that makes life worth living".



# BACK TO CORSICA

France



© Mouvement, France 3 Corse ViaStella

The series was first showcased at Série Series 2017 while it was still in production. A short 10-minute pilot was screened. Today's screening is the series' world preview. The team is looking forward to hearing the feedback the Série Series audience has.

#### The evolution of the project

Filming began in Corsica, during the month of August, after Série Series 2017. With regards to production, Michèle Casalta would like to thank Série Series for giving them the opportunity to present *Back to Corsica* during the previous edition. She feels that it helped, and that it was very energizing. The budget grew slightly. Nevertheless, the filming was very short.

#### A story of women

The creator, Félicia Viti, wanted to put complex and vivid female characters on screen. Each episode, set in a humorous reality, focuses on a different character, where we discover the various facets of their personalities, showing the complexities of how we perceive ourselves. The first episode looks at the main character: Andréa, who meets up with her

best friend, Marie-Luce. This childhood friendship, where the relationship is highly dependent, also seems to be deteriorating. Andréa is in love with Alice and Marie-Luce will spend her summer fleeing a boy who is endearing yet toxic. The first episode marks the start of these storylines.

#### Corsica through the eyes of an «expat»

Marie Barraco mentions that the series stems from the creator's own experience as a Corsican who lived in Paris and then returned to Corsica. Félicia Viti agrees: her aim was to show her own point of view, through a comedy, which is quite rare when we look at other dramas set in Corsica. This is her reality, often funny and off kilter. She specifically wanted to work on the dialogues to reflect Corsican humour.

#### France 3 Corse ViaStella

Marie Barraco goes back to the subject of filming and asks at what point the casting was confirmed. Last year, at the time of Série Series, it was almost finalised, however certain actors were cast later on. For example, Charlotte, present here today, came onboard a year later than Camille who acted in the pilot.

#### SPEAKERS

**Félicia Viti**, creator, screenwriter, director  
**Michèle Casalta**, producer, Mouvement  
**Océane Court-Mallaroni**, actress  
**Charlotte Deniel**, actress

#### CHAIRED BY

**Marie Barraco**, Série Series festival director

#### CREDITS

Original idea: Félicia Viti  
 Screenwriters: Félicia Viti, Cécile Vargaftig  
 Directors: Félicia Viti, Philippe Raffalli  
 Composer: Casablancadivrs  
 Production: Mouvement  
 Producer: Michèle Casalta  
 Broadcaster: France 3 Corse ViaStella  
 Distributor: Mouvement  
 With: Océane Court-Mallaroni, Anna-Marie Filippi, Charlotte Deniel, Camille Tissot, Antoine Albertini, Jeremy Alberti  
 Format: 8x26'  
 Date of broadcast: Sept. 2018

Going back to the pilot, Marie Barraco underlines that it is fortunate that they were able to produce images prior to filming the series: this allows the series to come to life very early on. She asks the team about France 3 Corsica ViaStella's policy.

France 3 Corse ViaStella is a fully-fledged channel, which is part of France Télévisions. Despite only running 21 hours a day and not having many means, projects still come to fruition thanks to strong political will. Félicia Viti explains that the creation of the series was an excellent exercise with regards to scriptwriting and an experiment enabled by France 3 Corse ViaStella thanks to their creative freedom and willingness to take risks. The channel's support is a beautiful launch pad, although the lack of means remains an obstacle. Michèle Casalta hopes that a season 2 could mobilise more partners and therefore more means.

#### A tense economy

The lack of means resulted in a speedy shoot: only 5 weeks for 8 episodes. This would have been impossible had it not been for a tight-knit and motivated team. The writing was also completed within a short time frame. Overall this had a positive impact: it's a lively and strong series, with a real energy.

There was not enough time for rehearsals prior to filming. To make up for the lack of time prior to filming, Félicia Viti remained available for the actors, to go through the characters' challenges in order to help them understand their roles.

The actors say they enjoyed being closed off and it enabled them to work on their characters. Life in this community over the 5 weeks lead the actors to develop relationships and to work consistently... They were able to work on their characters thanks to in-depth conversations with the creator about the characters' relationships. The acting was also enriched by research on other performances, other references and other films.

Félicia Viti had a very clear vision of each character, and detailed biographies, which enabled the actors to get into character easily before filming. Furthermore, the more she got to know the actresses, the more their characters resembled them and the writing evolved. The writing process was very intuitive.

#### Season 2 ?

A season 2 is on the cards, however this time under different conditions. There is a real desire to make something better, more spread out over time, to work correctly.

Marie Barraco mentions France 3 Corse ViaStella's vivacity when it comes to series, with a second Corsican project selected at Série Series this year, which is quite surprising for a regional channel! Indeed, the channel has a clear policy, but it will take real means to carry it out. The budget for *Back to Corsica* was 1 million euros, which is often the equivalent for a single episode in Europe. With this budget, 8 episodes were made!



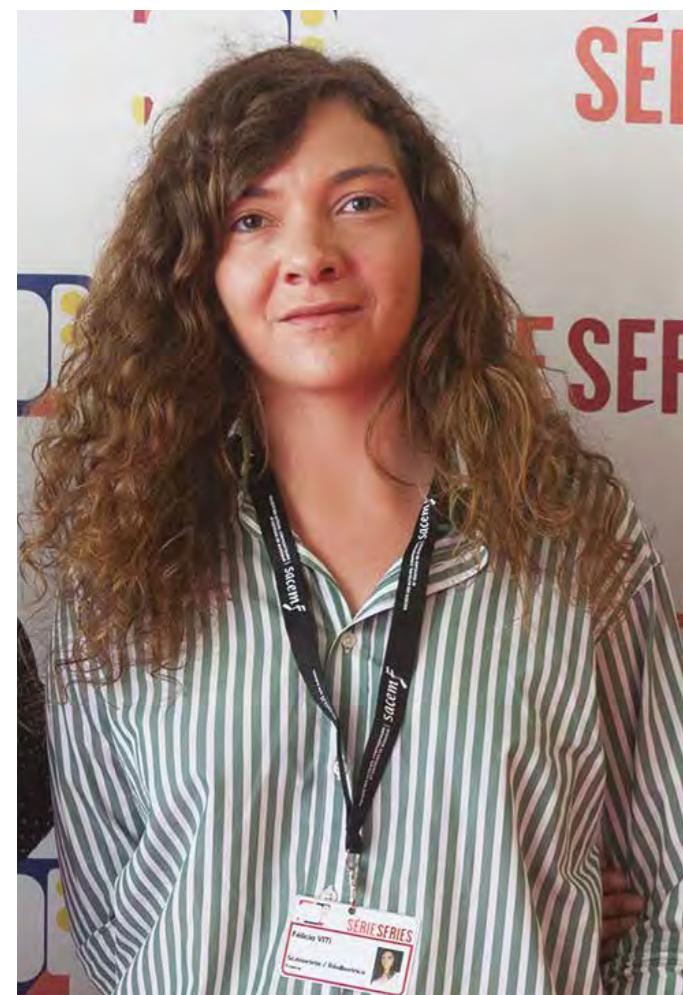
This was done thanks to the whole team, crew, actors, etc., who were generous with their time. In addition to this, the series was filmed in similar conditions to a documentary: the beaches were not rented and the village helped out the entire summer: houses, parties, inhabitants... It would be possible to repeat this process, however it was exhausting. Michèle Casalta hopes they will have more time and more team members. Ideally, the budget for the series would be multiplied by three.

Marie Barraco stresses that this is Félicia's first series and the quality comes from hard work, talent and method rather than just funding

#### Regional identity

An audience member highlights the incredible work that was put into representing Corsican identity. The actors' accents, the tone, the vivacity, covering a variety of subjects through complex female characters, steering away from stereotypes.

Michèle Casalta emphasises that this series is a trial for France 3 Corse ViaStella who do not yet have a broadcasting model for series. Everything will depend on the audience's reaction. The broadcast will most likely be two episodes at a time over four weeks, as well



as reruns. Although they will not be on France Télévision's replay platform, the contract states that 8 other regions can broadcast the series simultaneously, as well as the RFO channels (Réseau France Outre-mer).

France Télévisions has exclusive rights on the first broadcast and then Michèle will distribute the series to ensure its future. According to her, a wider distribution will give a legitimacy to France 3 Corse ViaStella and obtain means that are level with those of France Télévisions'. Broadcasters will be sought after in France and abroad.

Marie Barraco concludes that the support of regional broadcasters gives the opportunity to create regional content with strong cultural resonance.



#### SPEAKERS

**Monir Aït Hamou**, co-creator, screenwriter, director

**Thomas François**, screenwriter, director

**Cédric Vantroyen**, head of production, Kings of Comedy

#### CHAIRED BY

**Marie Barraco**, director of Série Series

#### CREDITS

Country: Belgium

Original idea: Mustapha Abatane, Monir Aït Hamou

Screenwriters: Monir Aït Hamou, Mustapha Abatane, Thomas François, Julie Bertrand, Omar Semati, Hicham El Ghazi, Gaëtan Delfrière, Simon Bertrand

Directors: Thomas François, Monir Aït Hamou, Hicham Insaan

Producer: Gilles Morin

Production: Kings Entertainment, Media Group, RTBF

Broadcaster: RTBF

Distributor: Crazy Cow

With: Mourade Zeguendi, Joffrey Verbruggen, Nola Tilman, Lydie Duvivier, Erico Salomone, Zidani

Format: 10x52'

Date of broadcast: May 2018

Cédric Vantroyen, head of production, presents the series and introduces his companions: Monir Aït Hamou and Thomas François, both screenwriters and directors, before the screening of the episode. He thanks the RTBF and specifically Sylvie Coquart-Morel for her support. The series' test pilot was presented at Série Series 2017; today, it is a brand-new exclusive edit of episodes 1 and 2 that will be unveiled.

#### Finding the right tone

The screenwriters worked as a "pool" of writers: they were initially a team of four, then several people joined to ensure they finished the series before the World Cup, but also to ensure they met the requirements of a comedy drama, and to work on the characters. In-depth research was conducted. The series stems from specific desires and references, and was the first project of this magnitude for a large part of the creative team.

Initially, they hesitated between drama and comedy, but ultimately the project became a dramatic comedy "with a good Belgian

## CHAMPION

Belgium

twist"! It is important to remember that Kings of Comedy, the production company behind this project, began with specialising in organising gigs for stand-up comedians.

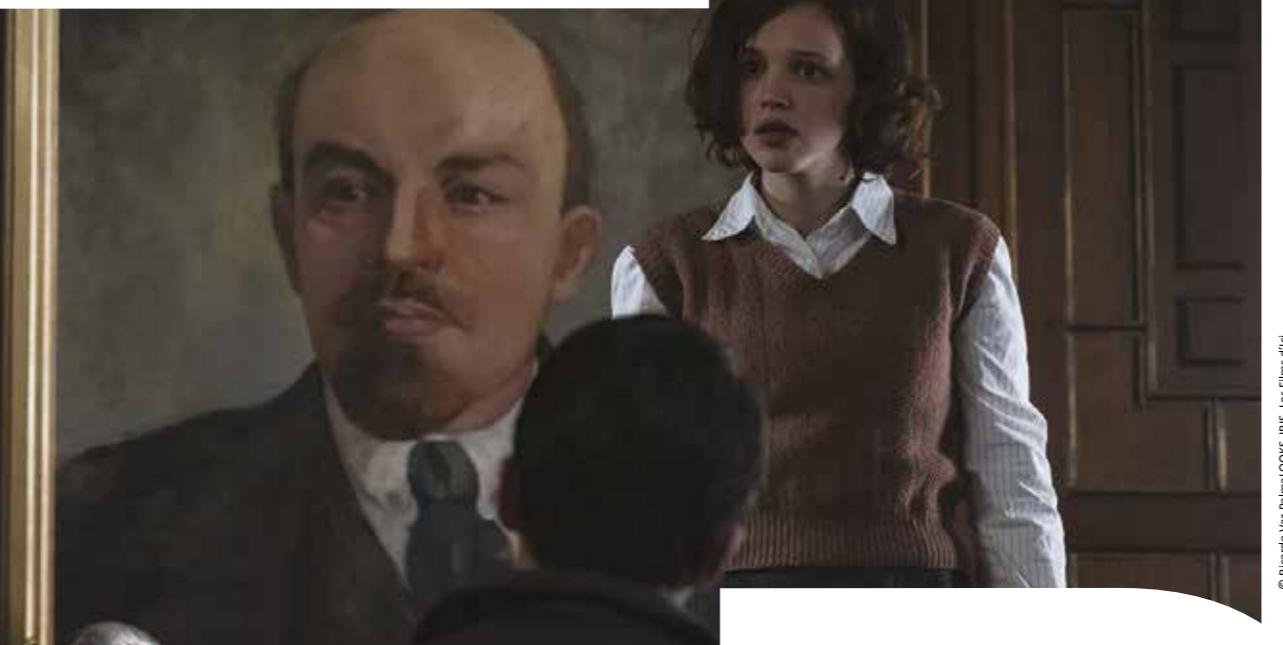
#### Broadcasting and distribution prospects

The RTBF has supported and followed the project the whole way through. After five months of writing, they filmed in twenty-four days and edited in three and a half months. The version screened is a re-edit which was created specifically for international distribution and combines episodes 1 and 2.

The series was broadcast by RTBF on tv and was available on their online platform, Auvio. The producer now hopes to sell it internationally. They are currently discussing the format: it could be sold as is, in 10 x 52', or with this new pilot of 70' which combines episodes 1 and 2.

# CLASH OF FUTURES

Germany, France, Luxembourg, Belgium



© Ricardo Vaz Palma/LOOKS, IRIS, Les Films d'Ici

## Introduction

Olivier Broche is happy to welcome these two speakers to Série Series, a partner event of the *War on Screen* festival on which he is one of the curators. The fifth edition of the *War on Screen* festival will be held at Châlons-en-Champagne from the 2nd to 7th October.

Gunnar Dedio points out to the audience that the episode that will be screened today, the editing of which has just finished, is not the final version.

## Origin and pitch of the series

Gunnar Dedio recalls the international success of the European co-production *Diaries of the Great War*, a 2014 series about the Great War (1914-1918) that Frédéric Goupil had worked on. The story was told from the point of view of several real-life characters from different countries. It was based on their letters and diaries. The same idea was used for this "second season". The plot unfolds via personal testimony, memoirs and correspondances, with a mix of archive images and fictional images, this

time covering the period between 1918 and 1939; an undoubtedly complex period to cover as this inter-war period was a big backwater of utopias where everyone was going pushing their own communism or nationalism.

*Clash of Futures* follows the destinies of thirteen men and women from Austria, Russia, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Poland and France. It's the plurality and intimacy of the points of view that make it so original. It's what enables them to bring to life the history pages of the 20s and 30s in Europe, in all their facets and contradictions.

Gunnar Dedio, a German himself, explains that it was simply by chatting with his Polish wife that he realised how differently we can see the same things in a completely different light depending on our origin, on the country we belong to or our history. History is always the product of a Nation, which in itself is an artificial construction aiming to create community. The basic idea was to narrate whilst respecting the singularity of each point of view on every situation or conflict.

## SPEAKERS

Frédéric Goupil, screenwriter  
Gunnar Dedio, producer, LOOKS Films

## CHAIRED BY

Olivier Broche, actor and curator of the *War on Screen* festival

## CREDITS

Original idea: Jan Peter, Gunnar Dedio  
Screenwriters: Jan Peter, Frédéric Goupil  
Co-writers: Camilla Ahlgren,  
Jean-Louis Schlesser  
Directors: Jan Peter, Frédéric Goupil  
Composer: Laurent Eyquem  
Production: LOOKSfilm, IRIS Group, Les Films D'Ici  
Producers: Gunnar Dedio, Nicolas Steil, Serge Lalou  
Broadcasters: ARTE, ARD, SWR, NDR, WDR, RBB, ORF, CT, Toute l'histoire  
Financiers: Film Fund Luxembourg, MDM, MFG, CNC, la Procirep et l'Angoa, CUS, Région Grand Est, DMPA, SACEM, Sofitciné & Cofinova, Creative Europe  
Distributor: LOOKS International  
With: Joel Basman, Michalina Olszanska, Jan Krauter, Solène Rigot, Roxane Duran, Robinson Stevenin, Rebecka Hemse, Pyotr Skvortsov, Natalia Witmer, Charlotte Merriam, Gennaro Cannavaciulo, Alexandre Nguyen, David Adon  
Format: 8 x 52'  
Date of broadcast: Sept. 2018

## An international series

The first focus was the Franco-German axis. It works as a sort of backbone of the series, explains Gunnar Dedio. In order to ensure a resolutely pluralistic perspective though, he needed to surround himself with an international team, both in front of and behind the camera.

As this is a co-production between around 10 countries, Frédéric Goupil explains, they needed to find situations and characters in these countries. An initial list of 40 profiles was drawn up. All of them met the following requirements: they had to belong to different social classes, and they couldn't be "first division" characters; in other words, they couldn't use people who were too emblematic or famous as their characterisation could easily become risky or caricatural.

That's how were selected, for example, Hans Beimler (German communist militant who was detained in nazi concentration camps - very well-known in Germany, not at all in France), Pola Negri (Polish silent film actress) or even the French May Picqueray (also known as "May the Resistant", who later became an emblem of anarchy). These characters also needed a sufficient story, as misrepresenting the truth was out of the question. The plot focused in particular on the "gaps" in their stories, these parts of their lives not covered by the press or history.

## A delicate back and forth between archives and fiction

It took no less than a year and a half of residency with five people (the showrunner Jan Peter, Gunnar Dedio, two researchers who were there through the whole process to document and support the series, and Frédéric Goupil) in order to bring the project to fruition. Frédéric Goupil points out that, for him, the drama side of things was added to give rhythm to the piece; more precisely to "give the characters speed".

The budget had very little to do with determining the proportion of archive images versus fictional ones. Although creating drama scenes is expensive, finding good archives and restoring them is a huge and very costly process. So, from the start, the writing process was a subtle back and forth between reality and fiction; the artistic and technical quality of the archives played a huge role in the series.

The idea of colouring the archives, although discussed, was put to one side. Gunnar Dedio explains that, this being a question of memory, it was important not to betray the archives by colouring them and thereby creating an image that did not exist. This would also have made the passage from fact to fiction unclear. This was talked over, confirms Frédéric Goupil, especially considering something like *Apocalypse: The Second World War*. Although the idea was attractive at first, this would undoubtedly have led them to melt the images into one another, at the risk of becoming vulgar. However, on the audio front, a huge amount of work was done, to the point one can almost describe it as sound colouring.

## An explosive mix of languages

The main characters all speak different languages. One of the big discussions on the series was to know how, beyond the writer's desire that the original voices be the markers of the location where the action takes place, to deal with this question of multiple languages. Of course, broadcasting requirements and audience understanding came in to play and led to compromises being made. Overall, however, the casting and the language selection were done in such a way that everything seemed as authentic as possible. Everything was controlled and reviewed to the very last detail. For example, Beimler had a Bavarian accent that could not be lost.



An obvious consequence of this multitude of languages was that subtitling had to be a part of the series.

#### Winning peace

Using Clémenceau's famous quote, "We have won the war, now we need to win peace...", Olivier Broche notes that the series shows the horrors of the crisis, which are almost as bad as the war itself, and questions the speakers on the difficulties of narrative coherence over such a long 20 year period. Frédéric Goupil confirms that this wasn't a problem on 1924-18, whereas in *Clash of Futures*, which is over a much longer period, there are obviously going to be breaks, even disappearances (which is the case for Marina Yurlova, a Russian actor of Cossack descent disappeared to the US), as well as appearances.

#### Discussion with the audience...

An audience member, not a specialist of series but a fervent lover of literature and history, congratulates the team on the incredible quality of what she saw today, particularly the uncanny resemblance of some of the actors with the real-life people they portray. Frédéric Goupil points out that the presence on set of Solène Rigot, a rising French film star whose resemblance to May Picqueray is uncanny, is owed entirely to Sarah Teper (assistant director).

Olivier Broche then brings up the mutiny episode, which he thought was particularly strong. Gunnar Dedio points out that it was after *Apocalypse: The Second World War* that the "Film is War" notion was born. It's the idea that our memory isn't created so much by the events themselves

as it is by the media who take part in reinventing that memory. That's why series like *Clash of Futures* have such a big responsibility of making us relive forgotten moments, like this mutiny. Frédéric Goupil adds that History is told here not by a book or a narration, but through feelings and emotions: that's what the characters are there for.

Olivier Broche closes the discussion by congratulating them on referencing the UFA (the UFA was one of the most important production companies in Germany during the first half of the 21st Century, notably under the Weimar Republic; created in 1917 as a political and military propaganda tool, it was nationalised and became a government agency under the Nazi regime), and the film industry in general, via Ernst Lubitsch. How did that character end up in the screenplay rather than someone like, say, Fritz Lang, whose career started at roughly the same time? Gunnar Dedio explains that Lubitsch was selected based on his common thread with Pola Negri, whose presence as a Polish woman was indispensable to the series. Frédéric Goupil adds that cinema being the internet of those times, it was important to have such an influential ambassador of this art form in the series.

The eight episodes (52 minutes each) of *Clash of Futures* will be broadcast in France on the 11th, 12th and 13th September on Arte, and then the series will be sent around Europe.



## CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE

Sweden

#### SPEAKERS

**Peter Arrhenius**, screenwriter  
**Christian Wikander**, producer, Twelve Town  
**Florence Pernel**, actress

#### CHAIRED BY

**Arnaud Malherbe**, screenwriter and director

#### CREDITS

Original title: *Ingen utan skuld*  
Original idea: Peter Arrhenius  
Screenwriters: Peter Arrhenius, Malin Lagerlöf, Fredrik T. Olsson  
Director: Charlotte Brändström  
Composer: Frans Bak  
Production: Brain Academy, Twelve Town  
Producers: Daniel Lägersten, Fredrik Ljungberg, Christian Wikander  
Broadcaster: Viaplay (a Viaplay original)  
Distributor: Echo Rights  
With: Jens Hulten, Vera Vitali, Henrik Mestad, Josefin Asplund  
Format: 8x45'  
Date of broadcast: Sept. 2018

#### By way of introduction:

##### Sweden and arms trafficking

Arnaud Malherbe explains that he was surprised by the clearly strong link – which he was unaware of – between Sweden and weapon selling, one of the key components of *Conspiracy of Silence*'s storyline. He admits to the audience and guest speakers that he never imagined there could be this kind of trafficking in a country such as Sweden, especially not with the collaboration of its own government. When did the idea to take on such a sensitive subject come about?, he asks the writers of the series. And how much of what is told in the series true?

#### Genesis and series pitch

Peter Arrhenius confirms that the subject of weapons sales is not discussed in Sweden, despite the fact that the country ranks within top 10 weapon exporting countries worldwide. The facts are therefore undeniable; Sweden is arms trading around the world, notably with India, as well as South Africa where two investigations have been closed supposedly due to lack of sufficient evidence.

But in this case, the main purpose of the series does not rely so much on this subject, which is of course part of the story and which stems from an article he read on arms trafficking between Sweden and South Africa; but more so about a man returning home, wanting to satisfy some sort of revenge. After many years of exile, the main character, Robert, launches a sort of hunt for Anders Speths, who attempted to kill him after having recruited him in illegal arm dealings. Added to this is a surprise daughter who was left behind when he left his homeland, who he does not know, and who will bring out his paternal instinct and concerns, forcing him to review his plans on bringing down the man and murderous industry which took so much from him.

#### Striking the right balance

Peter Arrhenius insists, first and foremost, on the importance of well-constructed relationships between characters, which are essential to the storylines, but also needed to reach a balance between the two parts of the story, which are : an industrial and mafia thriller which is based in true facts – they simply had to change

the names of the protagonists and companies for it to become a drama series -, and a story on people, with their complicated lives and emotional trials and tribulations, which are deeply moving.

The first episode does not spare the viewer, with incredibly violent murders from explosions and other disappointments, or even disillusionment, which instantly arouses empathy towards the hero and his hunger for revenge.

In *Conspiracy of Silence*, everyone will find the useful elements to question both their own consciousness and the collective unconscious. The creator wanted to play with these two images simultaneously, while trying not to fall into a too Manichean vision of the subject (the malicious weapons traffickers vs the nice guys), and this, with a bold team that was not afraid of addressing sensitive issues, in the realm of drama but based on true facts.

#### **Relationship with the producer and the broadcaster**

Arnaud Malherbe asks the screenwriter about when he contacted the producer and the broadcaster. Peter Arrhenius explains that they developed relationships early on, and the chosen theme was approved quite easily by the interlocutors, who were mindful of the somewhat awkward aspect of the project but were nonetheless onboard.

Christian Wikander confirms that it was a bold project, as it is surprising to see Sweden in this light, and on such slippery ground. Viaplay was contacted very early on regarding broadcasting.

If you go back a little in time, to the 80s, arms trading was the subject of many articles, and then it was somewhat forgotten. Peter Arrhenius had to resurrect the subject in order for it to be discussed openly with the Swedes, through the more original format of drama. In other words, Peter Arrhenius had the fortunate inspiration of «waking the dead».

As far as Florence Pernel is concerned, broadcasting is perhaps the crucial factor in such a project, suggesting that there is no reason why



France cannot also rid itself of taboos on this subject (if not through main broadcasters, then, through new platforms such as Netflix or OCS).

#### **A touchy subject, but a duty of the public service**

When questioned on the difficulty – or lack of – of re-opening the debate on the subject of arms trafficking, Christian Wikander states that it is not truly a problem to deal with this openly in front of the Swedish public. He returns the question to Arnaud: could it be possible for this subject to be broached in the same manner in France, through drama?

There may be a certain hypocrisy in France regarding this subject, where they prefer to speak of the fight against the arms trade rather than the money that they make from it and where there is reluctance for any change (could there be a series on Dassault ?). Regardless, the public players should fulfil their duty on this matter, says Arnaud Malherbe, like, for example, the BBC in Great Britain. He recently chaired a conversation with a Swiss team regarding their series on the banking industry and the sensitive subject of tax evasion of the main American accounts, and it is seemingly not an issue to discuss these matters (Obama, in this case, put an end to bank secrecy). So, rather than «running around like headless chickens», and as Peter Kosminsky explained during a previous round table here at Fontainebleau: «why are we not reacting?»

With a touch of sarcasm, Peter Arrhenius states that after all he might not be here next year to answer these kinds of questions. Because the industry covered in *Conspiracy of Silence* is undoubtedly linked to the mafia and is the subject of numerous debates, unpublished articles and other court actions...

Christian Wikander concludes that, deep down, we create unnecessary barriers: the English do not hesitate putting their Royal family on the screen, Americans speak openly of 9/11... We have a tendency to anticipate problems and to self-restrain our own creative processes, without any real reason. It's time to react!

#### **A «cross-border» series**

Florence Pernel explains that it is thanks to the director, Charlotte Brändström, that she joined the project. This is their fifth collaboration. She welcomes international ventures (English, Swedish, Lithuanian, French) that will help build a strong and unified European culture which we all need, and she is, more than ever, enthusiastic about these joint creations: we should go even further in this field. Indeed, Arnaud Malherbe emphasises the challenge of creating bridges between European countries and public channels – just like France Télévisions, Rai in Italy and ZDF in Germany, that have joined forces to create the « Alliance », to combat the rise of Netflix and to favour the co-production of series –, without ending up with a kind of Europudding.

Florence Pernel recalls a « Babel Tower » style atmosphere on set (a sandy area, in the close vicinity of Vilnius, which, through the miracle of technology, was increased tenfold and transformed into a Syrian refugee camp), the ongoing joy and fulfilment of acting in a foreign language, in a kind of «potluck». As she arrived once the project had already begun, she was particularly impressed by the special effects; and she is certain she will not be returning in the following episodes after the explosion she was in the first one!

However, we can imagine flashback scenes or dream sequences depicting the couple in a private discussion, the night before Robert decides to return, explains Peter Arrhenius. He wanted to make sure there was a particularly strong actress who was capable of portraying her strong sense of love in a few shots, at the beginning of the series, and give the main character the strength and courage necessary to return to this country and fight. Overall, it is the great alchemy between the actors that is the true strength of this first season.

#### **Financing and prospects**

The budget is around 1 million euros per hour of filming, and the financial set-up is a classic co-production, with half the costs covered by the broadcaster and the other half by the producer, which is sourced through various channels: various investors, tax loopholes, etc.

The first season of *Conspiracy of Silence* is now finished, the first three episodes – out of eight, each 45 minutes long – have been delivered, and the series will air at the beginning of September in Scandinavia, by Viaplay, a local VoD platform which mainly targets 20 to 50 year olds. No other broadcasting has been determined as of yet. Arnaud Malherbe hopes, for the team here today, that the audience will be taken by the series.

Peter Arrhenius explains that he is ready to write a second season, which has more or less been confirmed. He can already tell it will be a fascinating one, as he knows how he will develop the characters. From a creative stand point, he highlights the importance of creating stories in the most organic way, knowing where you are going with it. Indeed, with any good creative process, it is vital to know from the get-go what you are setting out to achieve, particularly with broadcasting partners.



# FATHER'S DAY

Bulgaria



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**Introduction**

Caroline Palmstierna starts by pointing out that the *Father's Day* team was present last year at Série Series to present the trailer. She is therefore very happy to see how much the project has progressed, as the team is back for this seventh edition of the Fontainebleau festival to screen their first episode. What is screened is a work in progress, not a definitive version.

Pavel Vesnakov and Martichka Bozhilova, who are working together for the first time, talk about their respective careers. Martichka Bozhilova has been producing for 17 years for Agitprop, a world renowned company that specialises in film and television program production. She has produced documentaries, but also independent films. If she were to have a speciality, it would be projects relating to social issues.

Pavel Vesnakov has notably directed successful short films, presented internationally and in France particularly, at the Clermont-Ferrand festival. For two years, he has been directing TV series and is

mainly working on a series that is in its sixth year of broadcasting. He is also working on a feature film that will be finalised next year. Pavel Vesnakov is straightforward about how important this project is to him. In a small country like Bulgaria, mostly mainstream comedies and detective series are produced, lacking social content. With *Father's Day*, it's a different story, which makes him very happy, even though there is an increased risk in terms of audience engagement.

**The pitch**

The very top of the Bulgarian screenwriting industry was called in for this project, for example the people who wrote Glass Home and Undercover, two series that swept up all the awards. With *Father's Day*, three screenwriters - Teodora Markova, Georgi Ivanov and Nevena Kertova - challenged themselves and their professional stance, going for something more creative and creating more socially engaged content.

**The pitch**

The very top of the Bulgarian screenwriting industry was called in for this project, for

**SPEAKERS****Pavel Vesnakov**, director**Martichka Bozhilova**, co-creator, producer, Agitprop**CHAIRED BY****Caroline Palmstierna**, production & distribution consultant, Shoot for the Moon**CREDITS**

Original idea: Teodora Markova, Georgi Ivanov, Nevena Kertova, Martichka Bozhilova

Screenwriters: Teodora Markova, Georgi Ivanov, Nevena Kertova

Director: Pavel Vesnakov

Production: AGITPROP

Producers: Martichka Bozhilova, Georgi Bogdanov, Boris Missirkov (executive producers)

Broadcaster: Bulgarian National Television

With: Zahary Baharov, Vesela Babinova, Patrick Sean Hessen, Alexander Sano, Gloria Petkova

Format: 6x54'

Date of broadcast: autumn 2018

example the people who wrote Glass Home and Undercover, two series that swept up all the awards. With *Father's Day*, three screenwriters - Teodora Markova, Georgi Ivanov and Nevena Kertova - challenged themselves and their professional stance, going for something more creative and creating more socially engaged content.

The subject in this case is still a taboo in Western society: it's about understanding the importance of a form of equality or "parity" between parents who are divorcing, maintaining communication, not giving in to hateful feelings. This, of course, is for the children's benefit (divorce statistics in Europe are enlightening seeing as around one married couple in two gets divorced!); but also about measuring the impact of these situations on said children. This mini-series, which is made up of six 54 minute episodes, aims to convey a message that increasingly concerns us all: the necessity of being attentive to children and communication between parents and in front of said children when engaging in a painful separation process.

**A documented and engaged series**

At the start of the 90s, just after the fall of the communist regime and the advent of democracy, Pavel Vesnakov saw all of his friends' parents divorcing; and his eventually ended up separating as well. It can therefore be said that Pavel Vesnakov is inspired by his own experiences in a way. He can identify with the child, having witnessed similar scenes.

Martichka Bozhilova points out that the entire series in general is inspired by true stories, gathered by a very active Bulgarian association that advocates parental equality in divorce and allowed the production to access their blog, whilst respecting anonymity of course. Experts in this type of situation were also called upon to check that the plot was realistic.

**All the way to medical issues...**

Even though it isn't possible to consult files due to the Hippocratic oath, we can still confirm that nowadays, especially with an increasingly easy access to internet, we need to double our vigilance with our children; a child can easily deviate, possibly very badly, in cases of particularly conflictual divorce, with irreversible psychological consequences.

*Father's Day*'s ambition is also to point out grave shortcomings that are all too present in our society. One could even speak of failure to assist

a person in danger; that's how much the harm caused is improperly measured or taken into account, due to lack of communication. Many children of heavy divorces suffer from parental alienation syndrome (PAS), a term that was coined by Richard A. Gardner in the early 80s. It references what he calls a disorder that involves a child continually belittling and insulting one parent, without justification. That leaves us very far from the idea of parental equality, mentioned earlier, that the series stands by. On that note, an emblematic line closes the first episode and it reveals the pitfall one must try and avoid; the mother says to her child: "your father doesn't love us anymore". It's these small, "innocuous", but actually very violent, types of phrases, that the series denounces. As the series progresses, the situation actually only gets worse, for the couple, their child and their group of close friends. Inappropriate comments multiply and the trouble grows.

**Casting**

Working with a child in front of a camera is always delicate. It is both brilliant and very difficult, confesses Pavel Vesnakov. The key word here is patience. It took almost two months to cast the young boy who portrayed the child. He was scouted whilst playing in a park. Pavel Vesnakov was struck by his look as well as the way he interacted with his friends. So, he went to find his parents, only to find out the young man had already acted in a foreign film: bingo! The first meeting was set up and Pavel Vesnakov discovered a child who is not only fiercely intelligent, but also very confident.

Then came the casting of both parents, Zahary Baharov and Vesela Babinova, who both immediately accepted the project. Neither one has lived through a divorce and although Zahary is undoubtedly the most famous actor in Bulgaria, Vesela is only starting to become known in Sofia. Both are magnificent in their roles, with excellent chemistry. This was all the more the case with the boy, to the point where him and Zahary have become friends off set, which only facilitated shooting. Zahary helped him a lot during the shoot, constantly talking to him and always in the right tone.

**The music**

When asked about the importance of music in the series, Martichka Bozhilova explains that the current soundtrack is not the final one. The production has a very precise idea of the music they want. There will be quite little, and it will be used effectively, to strengthen the dramaturgy.



**The writing process...**

In terms of the writing, it is pointed out that the three screenwriters named earlier worked together very closely on the writing of six episodes in "one voice". "They worked as one", confirms Pavel Vesnakov, who arrived on the project after the initial writing of these six episodes. They had access to this association's blog, he explains, and chose to focus on two stories: the central one of the parents' divorce and the second plot line of the group of friends and "witnesses". Meetings were held two or three times a month in order to deepen the narration of each episode. It took over two years to get to the final version, that's how delicate it was to write the plot. There were up to five different screenplay versions of each episode. The program director of the public channel BNT was also part of the work, and it was relatively easy to agree with the broadcaster on the narrative aspect.

**The financing and promotion of the series...**

Financing the series, however, was a lot more complicated. Without going into detail, Martichka Bozhilova points out that it's not easy to create a project like that in Bulgaria. Delays kept getting longer and there were no less than 9 to 10 months of pre-production, which is a lot compared to usual standards.

Even though financial aspects weren't easy - 7 to 8 times less than what one sees in France, but for Bulgaria, that wasn't bad! - the promotion of the series went well. Even though a lot of spending had to be cut, Martichka Bozhilova wants to acknowledge Bulgarian National Television, which took a difficult risk by supporting this project. The series isn't exactly "mainstream", and is actually quite risky.

**International prospects?**

An audience member points out that a topic like this - the dangers and collateral damage of a divorce, namely SAP explained earlier - isn't easy to approach. In France's case, it is not present in the audiovisual panorama. Yet, Martichka Bozhilova points out that it's a central question in society and has no doubt that can be of huge interest to Western society. At the Venice Festival, where the team was invited long before filming the series, some broadcasters showed interest. And here, in Fontainebleau, talks are underway...

So, the avenues of international sale aren't lacking, far from it. Martichka Bozhilova hopes that the series will be presented at many more festivals and events. Other than the success of the series, it is also important that this major societal problem is given the attention it deserves. That's what Caroline Palmstierna hopes will happen for the *Father's Day* team, and she concludes by saying that the Swedish series *Bonus Family*, which starts on a very different, comedic, note and then turns into something quite tragic, has been sold in the US. She hopes that *Father's Day* will also win over the Americans.



# LIBERTY

Denmark

**SPEAKERS**

**Asger Leth**, creator, head writer  
**Karoline Leth**, producer

**CHAIRED BY**

**Jean-Marc Auclair**, screenwriter and producer,  
Alauda

**CREDITS**

Creator and head writer : Asger Leth (based on the novel *Liberty* by Jakob Ejersbo)  
Co-screenwriters: Morten Pape, Christoffer Örnfelt  
Director: Mikael Marcimain  
Editor: Kristoffer Nordin  
Producer: Karoline Leth  
Production: DR Drama  
Broadcaster: DR  
Cast: Connie Nielsen, Carsten Bjørnlund, Sofie Gråbøl, Magnus Krepper, Charlie Karumi, Anton Hjelje  
Distributor: DR Sales  
Format: 5x58'  
Broadcast date: February 2018

**The pitch**

At its world premiere broadcast in Berlin this February, *Liberty* met with great success, points out Karoline Leth. She goes on to say that the first of the five episodes of this mini-series will be broadcast at Fontainebleau. In the late 80's, a Danish family decides to leave their northern lands to settle in East Africa, and that's when the setbacks start...

Asger Leth imagined a series where the idea of expatriation is treated like a kind of "reverse immigration". The Knudsen's really are immigrants in Tanzania, where they've just arrived, and things don't go to plan. All this in spite of the fact they are reunited with some of their peers, notably the Larssons, rich Swedish landowners. They share characteristic - if not caricatural - moments of the lives of wealthy Western expatriates. These moments were written with piercing accuracy and a dose of cynicism (notably the adults spending warm evenings drinking gin and tonics while the children occupy themselves...).

In a time when immigration is a central debate in Europe and has become a major political issue, it seemed interesting to the writer to "flip the script". This is done by

diving into the life of Christian, the Knudsen's son, who quickly escapes this very self-centred and well-off setting and is shown a different side of things by Marcus, a young Tanzanian man. Together, they discover a whole new reality. As the adults plummet, their story takes a backseat, putting the spotlight on the story of these two young men, which thickens as the plot progresses. *Liberty* (both book and series) is, in this way, an ode to youth.

**The speakers' journeys**

Jean-Marc Auclair asks the speakers to briefly talk about their respective professional journeys in the industry.

Asger Leth, creator and writer of the series, has directed documentaries and adverts.

Karoline, his older sister, started producing documentaries, short and feature films before discovering a passion for series. She has produced successful series like *The Legacy* for DR or *Rita* for TV2. She worked as an independent producer, then worked in Piv Bernth's team at DR Drama and then she joined the production company created by Piv Bernth, Apple Tree Productions. Apple Tree is currently preparing a series for HBO.

## The Danish audiovisual market

Today, DR produces around 20 hours of drama per year, and TV2 produces a few more. This year, 17 to 20 series will be produced in Denmark, whereas a few years ago there were only have been about 4 or 5 produced in a year. Like in the rest of the world, the big platforms are taking up an increasingly large part of the audiovisual landscape; in particular the Nordic platform Viaplay, HBO Nordic and, of course, Netflix, that recently launched its own original Danish series, *The Rain*.

Danish drama has garnered international renown with *Borgen* and *The Killing*; a wave many Danish creators still ride today. With *Liberty*, however, Karoline and Asger wanted to move away from the Nordic Noir, by writing a "colourful" and different series.

## 5 episodes

Asger Leth explains that they originally wanted to structure the series in ten episodes, to fit the ten year period that Jakob Ejersbo (who died prematurely, in 2008, at the age of 40)'s book covers. The book, from which the series is inspired, was a bestseller in Denmark, published in 2009 (Asger's niece introduced him to the book).

Then they realised that realistically, they had to cut down the canvas. After cutting it down to six episodes, they finally settled on five episodes, each 58 minutes long.

The plot is set in three acts, so they had the rethink the final moments of all the episodes in order for it to be coherent and, of course, suspenseful.

## The broadcast

The target was a real challenge. Indeed, broadcast on the very sought-after Sunday 8pm slot, *Liberty* would be seen by around 1 million people, almost 20% of the Danish population, which is huge. All the more challenging was the fact that although the story is about family, it also talks about drugs, sex and death, sometimes even violent deaths.

The channel was surprised by the idea, but Asger and Karoline were expecting a skeptical reaction and they knew that often, people don't know what they want; all one needs to do is guide their uncertainty... So their main argument was the interest in seeing how the Danes behave when they settle abroad.

Asger reckons he arrived at the right time. Just as the Nordic Noir - even though it still makes money - is starting to purr, DR wanted to "reinvent itself" in a way. So, *Liberty* was a good way of responding to this desire for change, and that's why they got the prime time Sunday evening slot.

The gamble paid, which proved that the Danish public was ready to see "something different". *Liberty* got glowing reviews and as regards viewing figures, won its "battle against the Nordic Noir" (a thriller of that genre was broadcast on the same time slot on another channel). The audience numbers kept climbing after the first broadcast, eventually reaching 1.2 million viewers.

As for the series' key assets, it is pointed out that DR put a lot of emphasis on broadcasting the trailer in order to tempt audiences. They were all the more excited to see Sofie Gråbøl - well known Danish actress who starred in *The Killing* and *Fortitude* - on the poster. She immediately accepted the project (plenty of big named

actors were gunning to be in the cast).

## A series that made a lot of noise

When it was broadcast in Denmark at the end of last winter, the series found its audience and opened the debate, not just because it didn't spare the audience emotionally, but also because it raised more global questions about the behaviour of Westerners in Africa. It notably sparked a debate on international aide and NGO actions, both of the time the series is set (the 1980s) and today.

As it has already been explained, Tanzania was chosen to fit the idea of reverse immigration that the creators were aiming for, although the plot could easily have been set elsewhere. It's important to note that Karoline and Asger's father lived in Haiti; so, some of the elements in the series draw directly from their youth (Asger was around Christian's age when he regularly visited his father in the Caribbean; he even says that he felt, when he read the book, like he was in the novelist's shoes).

The central message of *Liberty* is the question of how we behave in our own "local ghetto" when we're expatriated in a foreign land, with such different codes and sociocultural standards. That's what first interested Asger and Karoline, who didn't want to fall into a kind of "humanitarian criticism". On the contrary, they wanted to concentrate the simple actions and reactions of a family confronted with a "new form of freedom", which they struggle to tame and control...

Indeed, it seems that on arrival everyone wants to "do good". But, in playing this altogether pretentious game, one is quickly disillusioned and soon becomes *persona non grata in terra incognita*... It's that feeling of losing your bearings, almost disintegrating, including morally, which grabs the viewer. It leads them to see the big picture and question the relations between dominating and dominated countries, to question corruption and violence in all its forms, whether directly palpable or more underhanded and insidious.

## Scouting, casting, shooting and photography

The team spent a few weeks in Tanzania to really immerse themselves in the local environment and habits. Although the story is set in Tanzania, filming was done entirely in South Africa, for practical and logistical reasons (the presence of already formed teams...). It was mainly shot in and around Johannesburg and Pretoria (both of which quite closely resemble East Africa).

One of the challenges on the series was combining Danish and South African culture (there were actually a few disagreements!). Other than the top billing Danish actors mentioned earlier, local casting was not easy. Around 17 different dialects are spoken in South Africa, but the main actors all spoke Swahili. They had to go all the way to Kenya in order to find certain actors and extras.

In order to make the atmosphere dusty and get the "texture" and light that is so particular to the region, photography played a crucial role. The series was shot with anamorphic lenses, which was a choice the director of photography made in order to better reproduce the vintage atmosphere of the 80s.

It took 72 days to shoot - Karoline was there for the entire time, unlike Asger -, for 5 hours of series.

Asger Leth confirms that he was much too busy with the writing to even consider directing it himself; it was also important to find

someone who was the best fit with the vision that Karoline and him shared of the original piece. Although unsure at first, once they had seen Swedish director Mikael Marcimain's work, they were convinced he was the right man for the job; not just because of his vision and understanding of the project, but also for his unending positive attitude about everything and his ability to keep to deadlines.

## Opportunities

Considering the success of the series in Denmark and in Berlin, Jean-Marc Auclair asks if *Liberty* has been sold abroad; the Leth duo doesn't seem to know of any finalised contracts of that sort by DR Sales.

Karoline is currently working on a new series project that addresses the issue of the conditions of the Muslim community in Denmark. This is a topic that seems to never have been treated.

Jean-Marc Auclair concludes the discussion by getting confirmation that the fifth and final episode does indeed bring the mini-series to a close. He wishes all the best to *Liberty*, and hopes it will be broadcast in France...



# MATADERO

Spain



© Javier de Agustin

**Genesis of the series**

For a long time, Jordi Frades wanted to direct this kind of series, like a *"Fargo with a Spanish twist"*. The release of the American series in 2014 was the trigger point. And so, it was with daring, and a drive to pitch a Midwestern-style series, somewhat revisited with a zany provincial Iberian twist, that he contacted Daniel Martín Saez de Parayuelo to submit the project...

He also wanted to pay tribute to a certain cinema of the 70s which depicted rural Spain, from directors like Carlos Saura or Luis Berlanga for example, who, thanks to a great sense of humour, are undoubtedly the filmmakers that best captured the spirit of these regional areas in the depths of Castile. He also references Bigas Luna, better known in his country for films with erotic connotations such as *Bilbao* (1978), but whose greatest success, the comedy *Jamón, jamón* - which thrust Javier Bardem and Penelope Cruz into the limelight and also earned them the Silver Lion at the 1992 Venice Film Festival -, is obviously reminiscent of the atmosphere of *Matadero*.

In *Matadero*, nothing is fake, the narration is sincere, and it is palpable. Beyond the action, it dives deeper into the character's which is the wealth of the series.

**SPEAKERS**

**Daniel Martín Saez de Parayuelo**, creator, screenwriter  
**Jordi Frades**, director  
**Montse García**, producer, Diagonal TV

**CHAIRED BY**

**Charline de Lépine**, producer, Macondo

**CREDITS**

Original idea: Daniel Martín Saez de Parayuelo  
Screenwriter: Daniel Martín Saez de Parayuelo  
Director: Jordi Frades  
Composer: Juan Navazo  
Producers: Jaume Banacolocha, Montse García  
Production: Diagonal TV - Endemol Shine Iberia  
Broadcaster: ATRESMEDIA Television  
Distributor: ATRESMEDIA / Endemol Shine Group  
With: Pepe Viyuela, Lucia Quintana, Ginés García Millán, Carmen Ruiz, Antonio Gorriño, Tito Valverde, Miguel de Lira  
Format: 10x70'  
Date of broadcast: Autumn 2018

**A demanding job for the actors**

Because the characters are the core of this fiction, there needed to be a very precise - and sometimes difficult! - preparation with the actors. Indeed, they needed to find the right tone, with actors as well-known as Pepe Viyuela - a real clown at heart and very well known in Spain - they had to get him to focus his skills whilst keeping the wonderful energy that he has which fits the comedic aspect of the series perfectly.

**Spain, obsessed with comedy**

Daniel Martín Saez de Parayuelo is eager to cite the Spanish audience's specific preference for the comedic genre, even the absurd. "In Spain, we love to laugh!", he admits. However, he stresses that in *Matadero*, the tone is not just entertaining. And this is made apparent from the opening scene of the first episode where you see two men chatting in a car and telling each other jokes where we are unsure how to react as it is somewhere between funny, absurd and perplexing.

**Several writers**

There were five writers on this project, namely Daniel Martín Saez de Parayuelo who was defining the general framework, alongside four other co-screenwriters. The deep dive with the five writers, with Daniel Martín Saez de Parayuelo as the figurehead, turned out to be highly constructive for the narration process where they gradually found the right rhythm for the series. All the screenplays were available from the start of filming.

When it came to filming, it was a similar process to that of writing the series, there was a main protagonist – Jordi Frades – who was defining the general atmosphere, and two other directors for other episodes. So, there was no need here of having showrunners.

**The broadcaster alongside the creatives**

Montse García explains that the people from the channel – Antena 3 – were overall on board with the scriptwriters' biases and analyses. In most cases, visions were aligned which greatly facilitated the smooth running of this adventure.

After an initial pitch, the series' bible was written out, which set the scene, and then the channel gave free rein to the protagonists, who were able to work freely on their creation, only getting involved when it seemed necessary, to make – quite relevant – proposals during the final edit.

**About filming**

Jordi Frades clarifies that they had to film during the summer, as during winter the plains of Castile and Léon and of La Mancha are most often snowed under. The entirety of the series was shot outside, counting approximately 10 days per episode (10 episodes of 70 minutes).



Daniel Martín Saez de Parayuelo applauds himself for not attending the set – he admits he was a “persona non grata” -, arguing that it allowed for a more flexible writing period, for a series with delicate tones which required a lot of imagination. The series was written with imaginary actors in mind who finally took shape in brilliant people, such as Pepe Viyuela, previously mentioned, who Daniel Martín Saez de Parayuelo would like to commend once again for a remarkable performance.

#### Budget and prospects

The budget for *Matadero* is around € 500 000 per episode. Having five writers allowed for a somewhat tight filming schedule, and therefore enable some savings.

The series will be broadcast in autumn 2018 on Antena 3, with one episode a week. Montse Garcia does not hide her nerves, because although she is confident in the project’s high quality – last January and December, the series was acclaimed by critics during various festivals in Spain, and will also be presented at the prestigious Vitoria Festival in the Basque Country -, however it is still an innovative proposal and the bet here is slightly different...

After its broadcast on Antena 3, the series will be available online, and has already been pre-sold to Amazon.



© Raphael Polletti

#### SPEAKERS

**Viviane Zingg**, co-creator, screenwriter  
**Julien Meynet**, director  
**Paul Rognoni**, producer  
**Amaury Chabauty**, composer  
**Axelle Bossard**, actress  
**Anais Lechiara**, actress  
**Aurélien Gabrielli**, actor  
**Jean-Emmanuel Pagni**, actor  
**Cédric Appietto**, actor

#### CHAIRED BY

**Pierre Ziemiak**, development coordinator, Kam&Ka

#### CREDITS

Original idea: Viviane Zingg, Philippe Mari  
Screenwriters: Christiane Claudette, Arnaud Pitois  
Director: Julien Meynet  
Composer: Amaury Chabauty  
Production: Mareterraniu  
Producer: Paul Rognoni  
Broadcaster: France 3 Corse ViaStella  
Distributor: France 3 Corse ViaStella  
With: Aurélien Gabrielli, Jean Emmanuel Pagni, Marie Broche, Cédric Appietto, Axelle Bossard, Anais Lechiara  
Format: 20x20'  
Date of broadcast: Sept. 2018

*Over la Nuit* follows the tribulations of a Parisian couple buried in debt (following the malpractices of an unscrupulous brother and brother-in-law). In an effort to do the best for their son Armand, an 18 year-old with Asperger’s at the end of his schooling, Isabelle and Bruno respond to an ad looking for people to run a small gas station in Corsica. So, the family arrives in Francardo, a secluded village in the depths of a valley. The gas station is in decay and the disheartened couple are about to turn back. But Armand encourages them to stay and to try their luck.

#### A Bagdad café in Corsica

Paul Rognoni wants to make it clear that “*Over la Nuit* is not a Corsican series, but a series created in Corsica”. Corsica is, of course, a key element, even a character, in the series but it is first and foremost a series turned towards the world. The story unfolds in a kind of unlikely “Bagdad café” which adds a universal dimension. Viviane Zingg, who created the series with Philippe

Mari, explains that originally, they had not clearly defined where the story would take place. They had imagined the story of a couple managing a gas station in the middle of nowhere. “The storyline is set in Corsica but could have been anywhere else”. The series was somewhat thought out with the idea of exporting it. The village of Francardo looks like all isolated villages across the world.

It’s true that, when reading the pitch, you could imagine that the series’ main subject is the - sometimes difficult - relationship between Corsicans and Parisians. This could not be further from the truth. *Over la Nuit* avoids all the stereotypes that a story like this one would have usually used. When filming in Corsica, you can be tempted to play up the endless clichés (“Corsican hospitality”, the beautiful landscapes...) which continue to stick to the “Île de beauté”. The series does not rely on the, notably cultural, divide between Corsicans and Parisians, but actually on what unites them.

Paul Rognoni read a first screenplay a few years ago. "I must admit that something was missing, I wasn't quite sure what to make of this series". That is when he came up with the character of Armand, a young man with autism. Viviane Zingg was excited by this new development and re-wrote the series, which instantly gave it a new dimension. The story is mainly told through the eyes of Armand, a fan of astrology (like many other people with Asperger's, Armand has intense interests), always with his head in the clouds. Julien Meynet explains that he wanted the staging to fully encompass Armand's very unique way of looking at the world. When his parents, Isabelle and Bruno, see the gas station for the first time, they are dumbfounded. All they can see is decay and ruins. However, Armand sees things as they are, the cruel reality. His outlook is pure and new. Paul Rognoni is convinced that the character of Armand will allow the series to move a larger audience.

#### No such thing as impossible in Corsica

Paul Rognoni clarifies that *Over la Nuit* is the second series (after *Back to Corsica*, a series presented on the same day at Série Series) which is produced by France 3 Corse ViaStella. "In regions, the series economy is similar to that of documentaries" with 1.4 million euros for 20 episodes. Therefore, the episode screened today was shot in just over a day. On average, they filmed 17 scenes per day. On paper, this might seem unlikely. But as Paul Rognoni reminds us, "impossible is not Corsican!". These constraints were taken into account beforehand, during the writing stage.

As far as Viviane Zingg is concerned, these constraints were an opportunity. Granted, as a writer, she is used to a certain amount of

restraints. For example, she restricts herself to only writing scenes with no more than three characters (with more, these can take longer to prepare during filming). The fact remains that constraints force writers to be more creative.

Needless to say that filming a majority of the scenes in one same location greatly facilitated things. Paul Rognoni explains that the gas station really does exist. It is located in a small hamlet hidden away in the centre of Corsica. In the past, the village was at the crossroads of some of the key roads that were used to cross the island. About 20 years ago, in order to ease traffic between Ajaccio and Bastia, a diversion was built and today the main road no longer goes through the village. The gas station therefore shut down and was unused until it became the set for the series. This location is paramount in the storyline. The gas station is a character in its own right. However, Julien Meynet notes that the series does not solely take place in said gas station. "We did not want to film a sitcom". Gradually, filming progressed to the outside, the forests and the shrubland.

The main constraint was time. Julien Meynet recalls when Paul Rognoni was presenting the series to him, he clearly specified that he would only have 25 days to film 20 episodes, which are each 20 minutes long! He almost refused to work on the project. After agreeing, he set out on coming up with the technical solutions that would enable the crew to film on such a tight schedule. They decided to use specialist cameras, which are capable of filming in any light, allowing filming to take place at any time in the day or night. Due to this, he called upon young technicians (aged 30 or less) who were drawn to this kind of challenge.



Beyond the purely technical aspects, Julien Meynet was conscious of the fact that the series was built around these characters. He organised a week of rehearsals with the actors prior to filming. Cédric Appietto explains that rehearsals have become a luxury, whether it is for TV or for film. They were, in this case, absolutely necessary. As time was limited during filming, the actors knew that they would have very few takes (two or three maximum) and they would not have time to procrastinate, to work on their performance.

It was therefore mainly during the rehearsals that Aurélien Gabrielli built the character of Armand, working on his voice, his posture and his gait (the young man always has his shoulders upright and walks in a mechanical way). He feels it is important to specify that everything was in the script and it is essential to work from the text.

Axelle Bossard adds that the rehearsals not only allowed the actors to form their characters, but also to build relationships between the various protagonists. The rehearsals created a family atmosphere, which was essential as the series' main theme is family and community. Cédric

Appietto says that *Over la Nuit* is really a 'choir' series.

Julien Meynet then points out that the series was mainly established during filming. The first 8 episodes were filmed during the first two weeks and the following 12 episodes were filmed in three weeks. This way of filming has a clear effect on the final result. "You can feel a true build-up over the episodes. The staging gradually finds its voice. The actors take on their characters. When you watch the final two episodes of the first season, you do not imagine the conditions in which the series was created." Viviane Zingg confirms that the tone of the series was found during filming, "along the way".

To conclude, Paul Rognoni explains that the first season, which is being edited, will be broadcast on France 3 Corse ViaStella. He is currently looking for additional broadcasters to broaden the screening. The second season is under development.



# BANKING DISTRICT

Switzerland, Belgium



© RTS, Joy Louvion

*January 2012. The Swiss banking industry is in trouble. Washington attacks bank secrecy, targeting the core of Swiss prosperity. When the head of Grangier & Co., a private bank, ends up in a coma, his sister suspects a criminal act. But is the culprit in the family or the bank?*

*Banking District* was already introduced last year at Série Series while it was still in production stage. A series of extracts was presented; at the time, the content was still raw. Arnaud Malherbe, who is chairing this session, quickly summarises the plot: the episode takes place in Geneva in 2012 in a political context where Obama wants to recover money from a number of US taxpayers.

#### A series about banking set in Switzerland: a cliché?

According to Jean-Marc Fröhle, who created this project, the key was to find the right angle, driven by a desire to merge thriller and family drama, using patrician families from Geneva as inspiration. Ensuring it speaks to a wide audience, while staying true to the financial situation at the time: the Swiss

banking crisis.

They played on Geneva's reputation in the world of banking to ensure the series speaks to an international audience. Many things can happen within the realms of banking: at the time, they had official statements and the darker story of what was happening internally. It was perfect material to make a drama.

For RTS, broadcasting a series about banks was a huge first. For Françoise Mayor, the challenge was to go beyond the clichés often associated with the industry. The project's aim is to tell the story of this family within this arena, when bank secrecy was coming to an end. In drama, we know that the audience gets attached to the characters before anything else.

#### Independence and freedom of expression

As RTS is a public channel, Arnaud Malherbe asks whether there were any issues facing this subject head on. As far as Jean-Marc Fröhle is concerned, there was no doubt in his mind.

#### SPEAKERS

**Jean-Marc Fröhle**, producer, Point Prod

**Françoise Mayor**, head of drama, RTS

**Arnaud Binard**, actor

#### CHAIRED BY

**Arnaud Malherbe**, screenwriter and director

#### CREDITS

Original idea: Stéphane Mitchell, Fulvio Bernasconi, Jean-Marc Fröhle  
Screenwriters: Stéphane Mitchell, Brigitte Lefèvre, Vincent Lavachery,

Axel du Bus, Jean-Marc Fröhle, Stéphanie Girerd, Flavien Rochette

Director: Fulvio Bernasconi

Composer: Hans Mullens

Production: Point Prod', RTS Radio Télévision Suisse, Panache Productions, La Compagnie cinématographique, Teleclub, RTBF

Producers: Jean-Marc Fröhle, Françoise Mayor, Patrick Suhner, André Logie, Gaëtan David, Anke Beining, Sylvie Coquart

Broadcasters: RTS Radio Télévision Suisse, RTBF, Teleclub

Distributor: About Premium Content

With: Laura Sepul, Féodor Atkine, Brigitte Fossey, Arnaud Binard, Lubna Azabal, Stéphanie Metzger, Lauriane Gillieron, Vincent Kucholl, François Florey

Format: 6x52'

Date of broadcast: Nov. 2017 RTS ; Mar. 2018 RTBF ; Apr. 2018 Teledub

He explains: not everything was faced head on, however there were no issues regarding this. The stories, that were the inspiration behind the project, were blended for these to not be instantly recognisable. They often heard testimonials from bankers regarding dodgy dealings in certain banks – surprisingly never their own!

#### Investigative work

In-depth research was done during the pre-production stage, for example for the HSBC-inspired episode in which employees were interrogated by their superiors. For Arnaud Binard, the most surprising was the freedom of expression of the Helvetians which made a real difference: there is true audacity and it is a joy for the actors! Creatively speaking, the characters are written with great humanity, neither all white, nor all black. He notes that in France, at present, one feels a great reluctance from an editorial stand point.

#### A political series?

This series takes a bold look at the colossal amounts of money that circulate that citizens are totally unaware of. For Arnaud Binard, it is not so much the bankers who are involved, but more the capital and the way the capital is used by their owners. The banking professions are trades that have been practiced by the Swiss for centuries, with errors, of course, but also with key learnings following these errors.

Jean Marc Fröhle adds that they made sure not to tell this from a moral standpoint. If one reads the news from a strategic and political point of view, the stakes are rather more of an economic war than of a moral crisis. Swiss banking secrecy was shaken by Barack Obama and then by France, because they felt a weakness on the Swiss side and took full advantage of the situation.

#### A difficult time for the Swiss public service

The series was broadcast during a very particular time for the Swiss public service, that of the «No billag» vote, which threatened to lead to a removal of the fee and therefore the resources allocated to Swiss public broadcasters. The series aired in November and the vote was held in March.

Jean-Marc emphasises that the RTS showed a great determination and a particular courage in communicating, promoting and carrying the series, which ultimately got a great public and critical reception (around 30% of market share, with a lot of replay).

At the same time, at the beginning of the year, Swiss banking news was inundated by the automatic exchange of data. Banking District was used to explain this and to illustrate the history of the end of bank secrecy, in short to illustrate the news.

As far as the banks are concerned, adds Jean Marc Fröhle, there was a weak attack on the financial markets but the series was carried by its audience. Many bankers have responded well because the creators made sure to avoid any moral judgment. There is a moral, but it is on the periphery.

#### Season 2... and more?

Season 2 is currently being written; the team would ideally like to create at least a third season. The news is ever changing so will undoubtedly provide material. The prism of banks makes it possible to approach a variety of topics. Therefore, season 2 proposes a different angle, more focused on natural resources and trade issues in Africa. The subject is inexhaustible!



# STATE OF HAPPINESS

Norway



© Petter Skjelle Henriksen - NRK - Maipo films

Série Series' 7th edition comes to a beautiful end with this splendid Norwegian series. *State of Happiness* tells the story of a changing nation, and four young people who are thrown into a whirlwind of opportunities. It's the summer of 1969 in the small coastal town of Stavanger. International oil companies have been test drilling for years, but nothing has been found and they are in the process of leaving. But the night before Christmas 1969, the gas flare at the Ocean Viking is lit. Phillips petroleum has found the largest sub sea oil basin in history. And everything is about to change.

**Traveling through time**  
Pierre Zéni notes the huge reconstitution work made for this period series and asks Petter Næss if this is what attracted him to the project. How did he work on the artistic direction? The budget was not a Hollywood one, so it required imagination to find the right solutions in order to create the right setting.

The main concern for the team was to create a realistic environment, which

didn't look like a museum, but like a real city with modern people facing an economic crisis; even though it was a very stylish time. The contrast between the general poorness of Stavanger and the prosperity of some inhabitants was one of the main challenges.

Pierre Zéni asks Pia Tjelta how she projected herself in this late 60s period: how did she deal with her role as a mother and housewife, how did she prepare for it? For Pia Tjelta, the main characteristic of this woman is how far she is willing to go to protect her family. So her preparation mostly consisted of understanding the relationships between the characters, the changes they go through and how it affects them, and the challenges she faces. She is terrified, extremely anxious, and protective towards her son.

#### The story of a nation

Pierre Zéni moves on to the historical context and asks Amund Harboe if he, as a young man, was fully aware of this part of Norwegian history.

#### SPEAKERS

**Synnøve Hørsdal**, creator and producer, Maipo  
**Petter Næss**, director  
**Pia Tjelta**, actress  
**Amund Harboe**, actor  
**Per Kjerstad**, actor  
**Tone C. Rønning**, executive producer, NRK

#### CHAIRED BY

**Pierre Zéni**, journalist, CANAL+

#### CREDITS

Original idea: Synnøve Hørsdal  
Screenwriter: Mette M. Balstad  
Directors: Pål Jackman, Petter Næss  
Composer: Gingi Anvik  
Production: Maipo Film  
Producers: Synnøve Hørsdal, Ales Ree  
Broadcaster: NRK  
Distributor: DR Sales  
With: Anne Regine Ellingsæter, Amund Harboe, Malene Wadel, Bart Edwards  
Format: 8x45'  
Date of broadcast: October 2018

Most people in Norway do know the broad strokes of the story of the discovery of oil, but the series gives precise insights into the history that are not so well known. Per Kjerstad agrees: everyone in Norway is influenced by the huge wealth of the country which entirely comes from oil, but it is interesting to get a better idea of what the country looked like before the discovery; particularly for someone like him who lives in today's Stavanger!

Synnøve Hørsdal adds that the series is not a history lesson, but a story on how people react to extreme changes and how their personal life is influenced by historical events.

She notes that today is a particularly relevant moment to tell this story, as the oil industry is facing some difficulties today. It's the end of a golden age and people now have to deal with it.

#### A long process

Synnøve has actually been working on the series for many, many years. Tone Rønning explains that NRK first came on board about 9 years ago to support the series' development. And only 2 years ago, they green-lit it, because they felt it was the right moment. To her, it is mostly a story about whether you want to stick to tradition or chose to move with the times, which is a still major question today. This project fitted well with NRK's wish to develop meaningful projects for the audience, to give them insights and entertainment at the same time. As Tone says, "you have to know your roots and a series like this may help".

To make this series, an important budget was required. It was one of the biggest investments NRK ever made in drama, and some money was also raised from the soft funds, the other Nordic broadcasters... but the budget was still quite tight, Synnøve says.

The series will be released this autumn but has already been presented to test groups. Most people said "Oh, we didn't know about this story", which is a great thing. The production is working on a second series but it has not been commissioned yet.





## ALSO...

This panorama of new European projects was completed with other screenings of new series, within the *Follow Up* sessions or in the context of special events:



### SPEAKERS

**Simon Kaijser**, director  
**Maria Nordenberg**, producer, SVT

### CHAIRED BY

**Jean-Marc Auclair**, screenwriter  
and producer, Alauda

### CREDITS

Country: Sweden  
Original idea: Jonas Gardell  
Screenwriter: Jonas Gardell  
Director: Simon Kaijser  
Composer: Andreas Mattsson  
Production: SVT  
Producer: Maria Nordenberg  
Broadcaster: SVT  
Distributor: SVT  
Cast: Rasmus Lethander, Eva Röse, Anja Lundqvist, Johan Rheborg, Ulf Friberg, Jacob Ericksson, Magnus Krepper, Torkel Pettersson  
Format: 3x60'  
Date of broadcast: 2019

*The Days the Flowers Bloom* is a story of loss that follows three neighbouring families, facing events during the 1970s and the 1990s which continue to affect their lives today.

### A creative trio for a trilogy

Simon Kaijser has been a director for 20 years. "My best work has been made with Maria", he says, as they have already made 9 or 10 titles together.

This is the third miniseries that they are making with the same writer, the talented Jonas Gardell. The trio made *The Half Hidden* in 2009, and *Don't Ever Wipe Tears Without Gloves* in 2012. In a way, the three miniseries form a trilogy.

Maria Nordenberg works as a producer in SVT's inhouse production department. Each year, SVT produces two 8 to 10 hour-long series, 8 to 16 hours of comedy, and some web drama for a narrower audience. Many dramas are adapted from the stage. Ten years ago, SVT started to make bolder decisions when it comes to drama, and it immediately paid off with international success.

### A story of loss

*The Days the Flowers Bloom* starts in the 1970s with three neighbouring families who have three sons of the same age. Each family is faced with a loss that still affects them decades later. The plot goes back and forth in time.

The first family experiences loss when the father leaves with his secretary. The second one experiences loss with their son/brother falling deep into drugs. In the third family, a man loses his wife and young son in a ship wreck in Estonia.

The creative trio didn't want to make the show too doom and gloom. They wanted it to also be comforting. The most important aspect was to recreate a sense of collective consciousness—which we tend to lose today—for instance by recreating the spirit of the 70s. The teaser and clips shown by the team, which just came out of the editing room, illustrate this atmosphere.

### A gifted writer for a narrative maze

Simon Kaijser and Maria Nordenberg speak in the same voice about Jonas Gardell: "He is one of a kind and we fully trust him. You don't tell him what he has to write because he writes from within". Maria explains that a big part of her job is to keep Jonas and Simon apart in order to leave enough space for Simon to bring up his own vision. But they still work all together, though.

The series is a structural nightmare as it constantly jumps in time. Simon Kaijser explains that this is quite challenging for the viewer, and quite demanding when you just read the script. That is his role: making the structure clearer. The series is made up of situations and characters, with almost no plot, which is a dream for the director. It's a very intuitive and intimate series and he has to create a flow, to make it look like looking into a family photo album.

### The series will air just after New Year's Eve.

Maria and Simon conclude by stressing the fact that the series leaves us with hope. Today is the day the flowers bloom, we are living it now. The general motto between the trio's three miniseries could be "every life matters".

# MENTAL

France



*Mental* is the second series, after *Irresponsable*, to stem from a graduation project by students of the 'Series Creation' section of the Femis school and brought to the screen for OCS. The extracts of this series, which offers an immersion into the world of a psychiatric hospital, are being shown for the first time here at Série Series.

Sheila is a young psychiatry intern. As the days pass and she sees case after case, she ends up finding the cruel world of the psychiatric hospital more welcoming than the harshness of far too normal a life.

Marie Muselaers welcomes the large and mostly female team onto stage. Tiphaine Daviot, who plays Sheila, and Raphaël, who plays Jimmy, have joined creators Angela Soupe and Sarah Santamaria-Mertens, co-writer Camille Rosset, director Emilie Noblet and producer Christine de Bourbon Busset.

#### Born on school benches

Angela and Sarah recount how they first met on the benches of the Femis. Sarah wanted to write a series based in a

psychiatric hospital and Angela followed her enthusiastically. It was meeting a young intern that gave them the idea to tell the story from that point of view.

They interviewed a large number of interns and their testimonies fed the project. Most of the storylines are inspired by true events. One of the interns even became their consultant.

#### The creative process

Together, Angela and Sarah wrote the bible and the pilot and then Christine de Bourbon Busset joined the project as a producer.

As they were writing the narrative arcs, they reached out to Camille Rosset, who already had the experience of working on *Irresponsable*, another 26-minute tragicomedy series produced for OCS. The three co-screenwriters then worked together to edit two years-worth of material and get the best out of it.

Camille then continued writing the episode structures while Sarah and Angela finalised the dialogues.

#### SPEAKERS

**Angela Soupe**, co-creator, screenwriter  
**Sarah Santamaria-Mertens**, co-creator, screenwriter  
**Camille Rosset**, screenwriter  
**Emilie Noblet**, director  
**Christine de Bourbon Busset**, producer, Lincoln TV  
**Tiphaine Daviot**, actress  
**Raphaël Quenard**, actor

#### MODÉRÉ PAR

**Marie Muselaers**, co-CEO, Lumière Group

#### CREDITS

Original title: HP  
Original idea: Angela Soupe, Sarah Santamaria-Mertens  
Screenwriters: Angela Soupe, Sarah Santamaria-Mertens, Camille Rosset  
Director: Emilie Noblet  
Composer: Julie Roué  
Production: Lincoln TV  
Producer: Christine de Bourbon Busset  
Broadcaster: OCS  
Distributor: Playtime  
With: Tiphaine Daviot, Raphaël Quenard, Eric Naggar, Marie-Sohna Condé  
Format: 10x26'

Halfway through writing, Emilie Noblet, the director, came onboard to begin preparation; half of the episodes were complete, the others were still being written. She took part in the ongoing creative process by contributing to the cuts which adapted the script to the length of the series, and actively worked with the actors to ensure they were prepared.

The screenwriters only came onto set a few times however they watched all the rushes.

#### A tight budget

OCS green-lit the project based on 4 dialogue scripts. Having limited resources, they had to rely on additional support from Playtime, the Île-de-France region and the CNC to reach a budget of €110,000 per 26-minute episode.

The limited budget meant there were severe constraints during filming. As Christine recalls, they had to shoot 12 useful minutes a day, which was a huge ask for the team, especially for the actors. Tiphaine Daviot and Raphaël Quenard agree: it was difficult for them to constantly go from one episode to another. However, the extensive preparation work made it possible to adapt to these conditions.

The series is not yet finished; the 10 episodes will be delivered to OCS by September. The team hopes this will increase the chances of a green-light for season 2.

#### Finding the right tone

OCS may have a limited budget, however they give the teams total freedom of tone.

Why choose comedy to treat a subject as tough as psychiatric illness? For the writers, this choice was inspired by real life and was necessary to give a realistic tone to the series; because, despite what most medical series would have us believe, in hospitals, we laugh a lot, mainly as a form of self-preservation!

The unusual and absurd situations are the driving force of the series, as shown by the extracts presented by the team.

In the first extract, Sheila, the intern, has been tasked with freeing up a bed; she chooses to discharge the eldest patient, The King, and calls on the social workers to support his reintegration, but they turn out to be highly unhelpful. Tiphaine Daviot highlights that this extract shows the moment where her character comes to a major realisation: it is often difficult to know who, out of the patients and staff, is the craziest!

During the second extract, as The King and another patient, Ulysses, are saying goodbye to each other, a tiger appears on screen. This scene required two nights of filming with a tiger, who imposed his own pace during the shoot, forcing the team to adapt to it. Finally, the third extract shows the arrival of a patient who suffers from a syndrome which makes him believe he is dead.



# INVISIBLE HEROES

Finland, Chile



*Invisible Heroes* tells the real story of Tapani, officer for the Finnish Embassy in Chile during Pinochet's coup, in 1973. Tapani's story gives us a chance to experience a true fight against a powerful terrorising force: how to follow your heart and trust your friends - and how to trust people who you think are not your friends, and see them as human beings.

Bringing a historical secret to Yle's screens Jarmo Lampela starts off with a few elements of context about Yle. As a public broadcaster, Yle is the biggest commissioner in Finland, commissioning 80 to 90 hours of drama each year. They are making 10 series in 2018 and will make 18 or 19 in 2019. A strong effort is made towards younger audience, in particular with the development of innovative projects for Snapchat and Instagram.

*Invisible Heroes* is based on real events which took place in Chile in 1973 and were kept secret for over 35 years, until a journalist wrote a book, which still remained quite confidential. Jarmo found out about this story when he heard Tapani

on the radio, and found it extraordinary. He thought it deserved to become public and kept this idea in mind for a while.

In 2015, Jarmo became Head of Drama at Yle. At the time, Yle was looking for period dramas and the channel's steering group asked him if he had suggestions to make. This is how the project came to life.

#### A story with a contemporary ring to it

Tarja Kylmä started to work on the project when Jarmo came to her with this story and told her "if you like it, please write it". *Invisible Heroes* follows Tapani, a very young Finnish diplomat who arrived in Chile in a period of great socialist enthusiasm. Suddenly, one night, Pinochet's military coup happened. Overnight, everyone became an enemy of the State. To protect a few of these enemies, Tapani and his family welcomed 50 people in their home, hoping to get support from the Finnish government to protect them. But this did not happen, as Finland wanted to remain a neutral country and didn't want to take part in this revolution.

#### SPEAKERS

**Tarja Kylmä**, screenwriter  
**Jarmo Lampela**, Head of Drama, Yle

#### CHAIRED BY

**Marile Muselaers**, co-CEO, Lumière Group

#### CREDITS

Original idea: based on real events  
Screenwriters: Tarja Kylmä, Manuela Infante  
Directors: Mika Kurvinen, Alicia Scherson  
Art director: Constanto Pissaro  
Composer: Timo Hietala  
Production: Kaiho Republic (Finland), Parox S.L.A. (Chile), Yle (Finland), Chilevision TV (Chile)  
Producers: Liisa Penttilä-Aikainen, Leonora González, Sergio Gándara, Pekka Ruohoranta  
Broadcaster: Yle  
Distributor: in discussion  
Casting: Pelle Heikkilä, Ilkka Vili, Sofia Heikkilä, Mikael Persbrandt, Gastón Salgado, Cristian Carvajal, Marcial Tagle, Ingrid Isensee  
Format: 6x52'  
Date of broadcast: 2019

Tapani was then faced with a tough choice: keeping his job, or letting these endangered people go back in the street. He started to secretly help them flee the country, gaining some support from the German State but facing a constant moral dilemma.

This is also the story of the first refugees who came to Finland, and of how Finland rejected them. For Tarja, this gives a very universal and contemporary tone to the series: what should we do with the refugees?

Of course, the project required an important research process. Tarja explains that she read the book on the story many times, she interviewed the protagonists who are all 80 years old now, and read the letters written by Tapani to "hear his voice". The protagonists read the scripts and accepted their choices. Jarmo says that when the project started in 2015, he went to see Tapani who said there was only one condition to get his permission: that he wouldn't have to play the main character!

#### A collaborative creative process

The project is a coproduction between Finland and Chile, in association with several Nordic broadcasters. A Finnish and a Chilean production company, Kaiho Republic and Parox, are involved, as well as broadcaster Chilevision TV.

The production process started in August 2015. Shooting started two weeks before *Série Series*, at the beginning of June 2018, and will go on until mid-September, for a release in April 2019 in Finland and Chile. The editing will start in August as the shooting is taking place

far away from Finland, and everyone needs to know early enough if some material is lacking. A trailer has been made especially for *Série Series* with images shot during the first week of filming.

Tarja Kylmä is the main writer and Chilean writer Manuela Infante joined the project as co-screenwriter. They wrote the episode outlines in Chile together last November. Each episode was born from both of them, there has been a full collaboration all the way through. Four languages are spoken in the series: Finnish, Spanish, German and Swedish.

The writers were in direct contact with the director all spring as he is also a writer and Tarja feels lucky to be invited to the editing room. One of the most important players in this project has been Constanto Pissaro, the art director, who did a marvellous job with the settings and locations.

The main cast is from Finland.

It will be a miniseries with no second season, so in a way, the process felt more like a feature film. The negotiations for pre-sales are in progress in several countries, there is no sales agent attached to the project yet.



# THE LYNCHING

Czech Republic



© Česká televize, Yann Renett

*The Lynching* was presented at Série Series 2017, when the project was still in development. Harold Apter and Jan Maxa are coming back today to unveil the first 20 minutes of the first episode, just one day after they finished shooting season 1.

#### A groundbreaking story

The Lynching starts when an outsider from Prague arrives in a small town. His presence reveals a hidden world of lies and deceit among its residents. While life in Buchnov may seem mundane, secret agreements to avoid truths are buried just below the surface; truths that, if exposed, might tear the community apart, destroying multiple lives in the process.

It is a character-driven drama about the secrets hidden in a small community. Through the characters, the creators want to tell a universal story: how we all look away when we should be facing tough realities; and how one never really knows those one thinks they do, including themselves.

Racism is one of the dirty secrets hidden in the small town, but there is much more.

There are many characters but the two main ones are two young people. The first one is a young man who comes back to the village where he used to spend holidays in his childhood; a member of the gypsy community has been murdered, and as he knew both the victim and the killer, our hero becomes obsessed with finding out the truth about this crime. The second one is a young pregnant woman who will be the only person to escape the webs of the town's secrets.

This story, its tone and themes, make the project quite groundbreaking for Czech Television and its audience. It is also experimental in terms of creative process.

#### A writers' room for new talent

Harold Apter comes from the USA and has a solid experience of writers' rooms. The initial idea of this project was to teach the American process of TV storytelling to a group of six young writers, either currently studying at film school or recently graduated, and who had no experience in writing this kind of series yet.

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The FAMO, the film school in Prague, is very artistic, very much centred on personal cinematographic expression. Recently, the dean decided to develop a more "pragmatic" activity in partnership with Czech TV. For a while, Czech TV and the FAMO tried to organise workshops but it was hard to create the right energy and nothing much came from them.

They realised that the best way to make it work and to fully involve the students was to give them the opportunity to get something produced. They organised a one-year workshop open to students from all the schools in the country and Czech TV committed to producing a pilot for the best project. They ended up with 7 scripts; 5 of them were really good, and *The Lynching* was the best one. When he read the script, Jan Maxa decided to commission not only a pilot, but a whole season! Harold Apter gives an overview of how he coached the writers' room to make a series from the initial pilot script written by three of the students. Like in the USA, they started with the characters: who are

these people, what do they want, what are they hiding? They wrote the storylines of each character. After that, they structured each episode, first in terms of emotional pulse, and then in terms of acts. The students storied the episodes on their side, and then Harold re-wrote them with them.

Casting started a year ago as some actors were extremely busy; they feel lucky to have a mix of big stars and new talent. Production started in March and the shooting just finished.

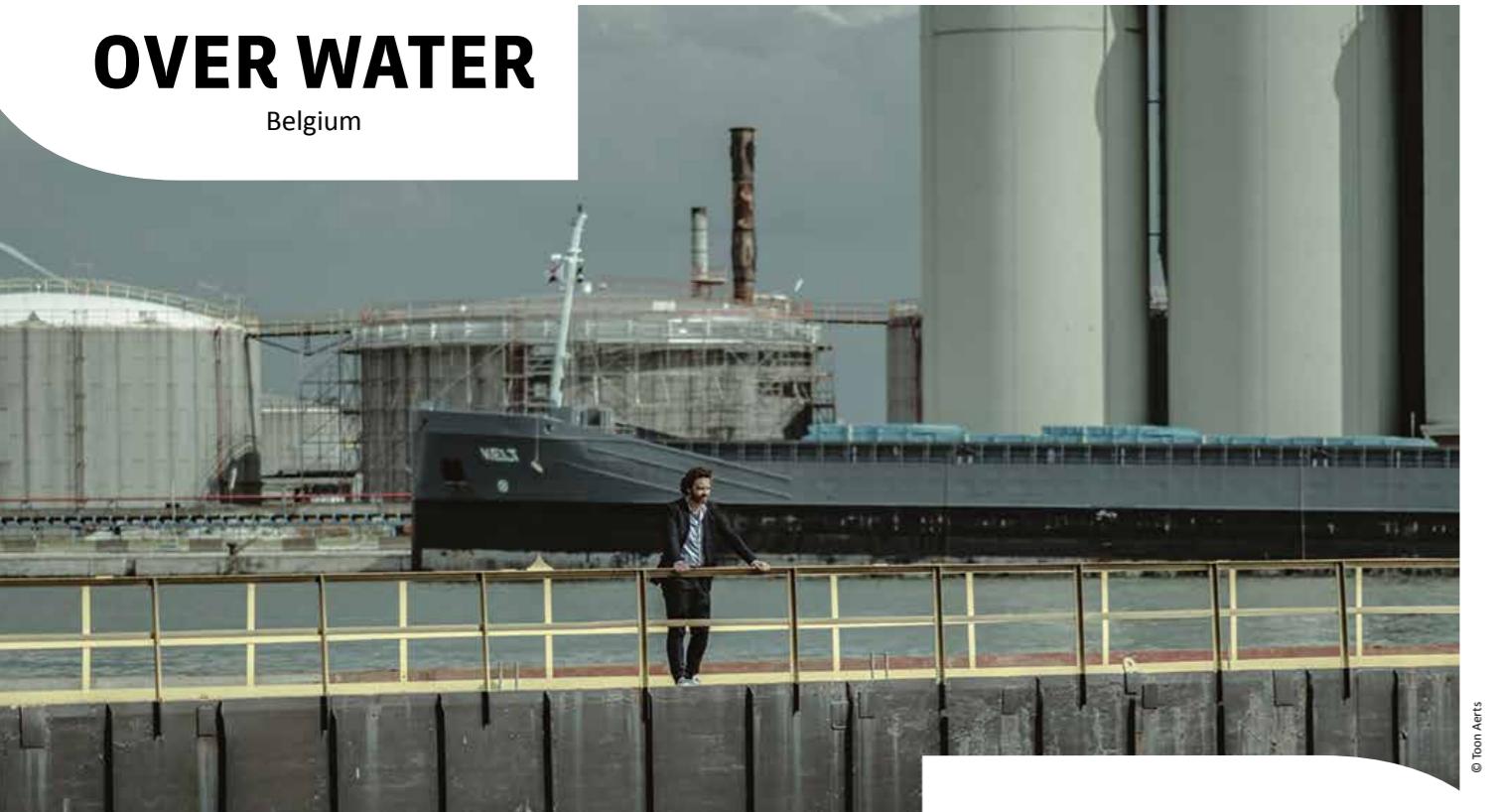
Uta Cappel explains that ARTE came onboard when Jan came to them with the project last November. As a European broadcaster, it was interesting for them to get involved in an Eastern-European project, and they green-lit it in December.

The production budget is a standard budget for a Czech crime series, around 300 000 € per episode, but the global budget is a bit bigger than usual if the cost of the workshops, of Harold's travel costs, etc., are taken into account.



# OVER WATER

Belgium



© Toon Aerts

Flemish television seems to be experiencing a new golden age. Dutch-speaking series such as *Tabula Rasa* (presented during the 2017 edition of Série Series), *Hotel Beau Séjour* and *Salamander* were a huge success, both regionally and internationally (these three series are now available on Netflix or are soon to be). *Over Water*, which was commissioned by VRT and written by Tom Lenaerts and Paul Baeten, should be no different. The series follows the trials and tribulations of John Beckers, the most loved Flemish TV star. During his heyday, he dominated the small screen and was adored by the viewers. But his addiction to alcohol and gambling leads him into a downward spiral where he loses everything he worked so hard for. His popularity, his friends and his success disappear faster than they had arrived.

#### The Belgian TV market

Before getting to the heart of the matter, Jean-Marc Auclair asks the speakers to describe the current state of Belgian television. Wim Janssen explains that Belgium is divided into three regions (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels) and has three communities based on spoken

language (Dutch, French, German). Currently, two large broadcasters dominate the Belgian TV landscape: the public broadcaster VRT and the commercial channel VTM which is part of the VMMA group. VRT produces approximately 60 hours of drama each year (this is without including soaps). While some series are produced for the domestic market, half of them are created for the international market. The channel directly receives about 120 projects a year. The channel's drama department is small and includes only three people responsible for the development of all content.

#### A two-man job

The 10 episodes of *Over Water*'s first season were written by Tom Lenaerts and Paul Baeten Gronda. They met more than four years ago. They exchanged ideas for a potential drama project and then met up again for an intense brainstorming weekend. The basic concept for the series was born from these initial interactions. Paul Baeten Gronda details that, at the end of said weekend, they came to the conclusion that "whatever the plot, the storyline had to take place in the port

#### SPEAKERS

**Paul Baeten Gronda**, screenwriter  
**Kato Maes**, productrice, producer, Panenka  
**Wim Janssen**, content manager, VRT, Belgique

#### CHAIRED BY

**Jean-Marc Auclair**, screenwriter and producer, Alauda

#### CREDITS

Original idea: Tom Lenaerts, Paul Baeten Gronda  
 Screenwriters: Tom Lenaerts, Paul Baeten Gronda  
 Directors: Infi Calfat, Dirk Verheyen (Norman Bates)  
 Production: Panenka  
 Producer: Kato Maes  
 Broadcaster: VRT - één  
 Distributor: ZDF Enterprises GmbH  
 With: Tom Dewispelaere, Natali Broods, Kevin Janssens, Tom Van Dyck, Jeroen Perceval, Egenis Brendes, Ruth Becquart, Ramsey Nasr, Jef Hellermans, Violet Braeckman, Herman Gilis  
 Format: 10x45'  
 Date of broadcast: Dec. 2018

of Antwerp, one of the largest ports in Europe and a central hub for drugs". From the very first conversations, they established that the series should be tailored for the international market. The port of Antwerp is, in this respect, an ideal location to tell a universal story. Once the scene was set, the two writers spent a lot of time constructing the plot and the protagonists' psyches for the upcoming series, most often during long walks in the countryside.

When the project was pitched to VRT, the main story arcs had been fixed. Kato Maes points out that it took very little convincing to get the channel onboard. Indeed, Tom Lenaerts is a true legend in Belgium. This famous TV writer has created two of the most popular series of the last few years: *Met man en Macht* (2013) and *De Parelvisers* (2006). Tom and Kato became associates four years ago to start their production company, Panenka. Wim Janssen concedes that the channel had total trust in Tom Lenaerts and his team.

Moreover, the pitch could do nothing but reassure the channel. By mixing thriller and psychological drama, the series is bound to attract a large audience. The trailer unveiled at Série Series puts the thriller aspect at the forefront, this was done intentionally to make viewers think it is a crime series. However, during the first episode, the viewer quickly realises that although *Over Water* borrows certain elements from the crime genre, the plot goes beyond this framework to touch on more universal themes. The channel instantly commissioned two seasons, which is incredible.

Paul Baeten Gronda explains that, overall, the writing process was quite long and ended up taking almost three years. Kato Maes confirms that although the main plot lines were fixed in September 2014, the scripts for the 10 episodes were only finalised just before filming, in May 2017. In the end, the writing costs represented 5% of the overall budget for the series (approximately 600 000€ per episode).

Jean-Marc Auclair asks about the channel's involvement in the writing process. Kato Maes explains that the comments were always constructive and, most of the time, highly appreciated. Even if, at times, the amount

of notes sent through was astonishing, if not slightly intimidating at the beginning, she sees, with hindsight, that the collaboration with the channel was very positive. Wim Janssen understands why the writers may have been surprised to receive as many, sometimes quite detailed, questions and comments from the channel. The aim was in no way to limit their creative freedom, but quite the opposite, to instigate a dialogue based on mutual trust. Although the channel sometimes pointed out what might have been considered scriptwriting errors, they refused to provide solutions, leaving Tom Lenaerts and Paul Baeten Gronda the full freedom to resolve them. Paul says that he always felt free. Sometimes, certain remarks were particularly judicious and shifted the storyline in directions he had not thought of.

#### A cinematographic series

As seen in the two scenes unveiled by the team, the focus was not only on the script but also on the form, on the aesthetics of the series. For this, the production reached out to directing duo Norman Bates – Infi Calfat and Dirk Verheyen – who have a great international reputation in the worlds of advertising and music videos. The two extracts of *Over Water* that were screened show that it's a very cinematographic series. The two directors were highly involved early on during the development process. Paul Baeten Gronda explains that "although their comments were not always taken into account, they were always welcome".

Tom Lenaerts has directed several series in the past, but this time round has preferred to focus on screenwriting. Having said this, he did attend the first days of filming to direct the actors. He then gave the reins to the directors so he could give his full attention to writing the second season. To conclude, Wim Janssen confirms that the first season of *Over Water* will air on VRT in December. The second season will air in November 2019.



# THE INSIDE GAME

France



Enormous financial stakes, political dealings steered by big money men, endless manoeuvring and manipulation, intertwined public and private lives: *The Inside Game* follows the jagged footsteps of an ambitious parliamentarian on the verge of achieving his ambitions in the dark heart of corruption and power.

#### Realistic political fiction

This French political thriller comes from acclaimed writer, director and producer Jean-Xavier de Lestrade, known for his brilliant documentary work and for his series anchored in society.

Matthieu Belghiti, who is Jean-Xavier's associate in What's Up Films, explains that what they initially wanted was to make a series focusing on how politics, society and the media intersect. For 20 years, they have been producing many documentaries, in particular political documentaries, and social series such as *3xManon*.

As it was important to find a topic that would reach everybody, they chose food, and placed the plot in the arena of agriculture and of the lobbies on pesticides. Realism was essential. And the project soon found an echo in reality with the big international scandals on pesticides.

As for *The Minister*, the project presented at the beginning of the same session, political fiction has been caught up by reality, in particular with Emmanuel Macron's promise to fight against glyphosate, which he recently turned down.

#### The dark world of lobbies

*The Inside Game* is about a farmer who becomes ill after being exposed to pesticides, and about a politician campaigning against the company selling those pesticides, Saskia. Alix Poisson plays Claire Lansel, an unemployed journalist who starts working for a lobbyist defending

Saskia's interests. When Claire joins the lobbying company, she has no precise idea of why she made this decision; but she soon discovers so many dark secrets that she decides to investigate herself. "There is something very Erin Brockovich-like in this character", Alix says.

All the characters' stories and actions are intertwined, they are all linked by what happened to them and by the decisions they make. This is one of the main messages of the series: to fight the powerful ones, you have to unite with others, to form a group.

#### Keeping the tension

The team unveils 3 scenes so fresh out of the editing room that even Alix hasn't seen them yet. Isabelle Razavet explains that it was a real challenge to keep those scenes, which are dialogue heavy and mostly set in offices and corridors, dynamic; the tension had to be constantly present on the screen. They had to avoid face-to-face, static discussions, in order to let the viewer feel the constant nervousness.

Alix Poisson agrees: Jean-Xavier de Lestrade pays attention to creating a constant movement. "When you work with him as an actor, what you expect is never what happens in the end. You have to imagine new, surprising options, and build something with him."

There will be 15 weeks of shooting. ARTE has small budgets, but Matthieu Belghiti says that What's Up Films small size allows them to be more flexible and to take risks. They don't know yet when the series will air but it might be at the beginning of 2019.

#### SPEAKERS

**Isabelle Razavet**, director of photography  
**Matthieu Belghiti**, producer, What's Up Films  
**Alix Poisson**, actress

#### CHAIRED BY

**Dominic Schreiber**, consultant

#### CREDITS

Original idea: Jean-Xavier de Lestrade, Antoine Lacomblez  
 Screenwriters: Jean-Xavier de Lestrade, Sophie Hiet, Antoine Lacomblez, Pierre Linhart  
 Director: Jean-Xavier de Lestrade  
 Composer: Raf Keunen  
 Producer: Matthieu Belghiti  
 Production: What's Up Films in co-production with ARTE France and Stenolla Production (Belgium), with the support of CNC, CICLIC, Pictanovo, Creative Europe, Procipre  
 Broadcaster: ARTE  
 Distributor: Newen  
 Cast: Laurent Stocker, Alix Poisson, Jean-François Sivadier, Pierre Perrier, Marilou Aussiloux, Christophe Kouratchine, Anne Coesens, Thierry Hancisse, Marc Citti, Marie Dompnier  
 Format: 6x52'



#### SPEAKERS

**Martina Bigert**, co-creator, screenwriter  
**Emma Åkesdotter Ronge**, producer, Anagram Sverige

#### CHAIRED BY

**Dominic Schreiber**, consultant

#### CREDITS

Original idea: Martina Bigert, Maria Thulin  
 Screenwriters: Martina Bigert, Maria Thulin  
 Director: Kristina Humle  
 Composers: Irya Gmeynner, Martin Hederos  
 Production: Anagram Sverige  
 Producers: Emma Åkesdotter Ronge, Martin Persson  
 Broadcasters: SVT, YLE, NRK, DR, RUV  
 Casting: Mikaela Knapp, Maja Rung, Anna Åström, Hannes Fohlin, Maria Sundborn, Jens Hultén, Kim Sulocki, Camilla Larsson  
 Format: 3x59'  
 Date of broadcast: Christmas 2018

50 years after May 68, this Swedish series centred on independent women comes as a refreshing breath of freedom.

#### The spirit of 1968

It's 1968 and newly minted, politically aware reporter Karin tries to land her dream job at one of the big Stockholm newspapers, but has to content herself with a little summer substitute position at a sleepy backwater daily. Armed with her typewriter, she and her rebellious artist friend Lottie each rent a room in the home of the newspaper's owner Georg. It doesn't take long before the peculiar pair have managed to stir things up in the little community where people have barely heard of the protests in Paris, much less the bra burning going on across the Atlantic!

This series really is a passion project for its creators, Martina Bigert and Maria Thulin, who have been pushing it for years and have gone through a long journey before seeing it made. Martina Bigert says she recently found her first email about the project, which was sent in 2011! But she and her co-writer, who always work together, were so convinced that this story had to be told that they fought for it even when their first producer let them down.

#### A light-hearted vision of women's emancipation

What was important to them was to tell the story of this generation of women to young people, and especially younger women, in Sweden. Many of them don't know much about the Swedish "Group 8", 8 women who fought for free abortion, for equal pay, against pornography at the end of the 60s. The characters in the series are fictional, but Martina and Maria wanted to pay tribute to

# SUMMER OF 68

Sweden



those women through this project.

As we can see from the scenes unveiled by Emma and Martina, the series has a lot of humour and aims to be entertaining. The lead character is a young idealistic woman who, along with her friends, wakes a village up and brings a new dynamic to its inhabitants.

It was great for the team to do the series in the context of the 50th birthday of 68, but also during the #metoo movement, which has brought up a new dimension to the fight for equal rights.

#### A wide, familial target audience

The series will air around Christmas on SVT and on other Scandinavian public broadcasters. The idea is to have a family viewing, to bring mothers and daughters together in front of TV – and also men, of course!

The series was developed by Martin Persson at Anagram and was commissioned by SVT in Spring 2017; Emma Åkesdotter Ronge joined the project a bit later and has been following it since then.

It is a 3-part, which may not travel as well as formats, but the team is considering making other seasons, set in 1973 and 1980.

# SAKHO AND MANGANE

Senegal



In keeping with its first African edition, Série Series wanted to offer a case study of *Sakho and Mangane*, a Senegalese series presented at Série Series in Ouagadougou in February 2018. Several scenes are unveiled here at Fontainebleau.

#### An African X-Files

Bénédicte Lesage asks the speakers about the genesis of the series. Alexandre Rideau heard of the project for the first time in 2014, when he was in Dakar. He was introduced to the project by Takis Candilis and Christophe Thoral (Lagardère Studios). The original idea was adapted from crime novels written by a Malian author, to create a West African crime series. Although the project was appealing, it was nonetheless slightly too mainstream (certainly not how *Sakho and Mangane* has turned out), too similar to crime series that air on public or commercial channels in France.

*Sakho and Mangane* perfectly corresponds to CANAL+ International's ambitions to produce premium original drama in Africa. What's more, the series is unique. The characters are completely atypical and the storylines are full of African mysticism. "The invisible world is heavily present in Africans' day to day".

Jean-Luc Herbulot was born in Congo. He grew up in Africa, watching American and Asian films. "I never had an African hero". As he is now a director, he has given himself the mission of showing what he wanted to see as a child. It is

#### SPEAKERS

**Jean-Luc Herbulot**, showrunner, director  
**Philippe Niang**, screenwriter  
**Alain Patetta**, screenwriter  
**Alexandre Rideau**, producer  
**Cécile Gérardin**, CANAL+ International  
**Ricky Tribord**, actor

#### CHAIRED BY

**Bénédicte Lesage**, producer, Shine Films

#### CREDITS

Screenwriters: Alain Patetta, Philippe Niang, Samantha Biffot, Olivier Messa, Augustin Ngom, Guy Foumane, Raymond Ngoh  
 Directors: Jean-Luc Herbulot, Hubert N'dao, Toumani Sangaré  
 Producer: Alexandre Rideau  
 Production: Keewu, CANAL+ International  
 Broadcaster: CANAL+ Afrique  
 Cast: Issaka Sawadogo, Yann Gaël, Christiane Dumont, Fatou Elise Ba, Christophe Guybet, Ricky Tribord, N'Diaga Mbow, Khatima Gadji  
 Format: 52'

this dimension – an African story with African heroes – which drew him to the project. "A 13-year-old kid who watches this series will be able to see themselves in the characters". Sakho and Mangane are lightyears away from the image of corrupt officers that are represented daily in African media. Jean-Luc Herbulot was also attracted by the idea of directing a crime series, a genre that is already well established in certain countries (South Africa, for example) but still very rare – if not non-existent – in West Africa.

#### A writing workshop in Dakar

Philippe Niang was at the helm of the initial writing stage, notably the series' pilot. When taking on the project, he imagined an African police duo (similar to the one in *Lethal Weapon*) faced, through various cases, with strange and inexplicable phenomena. The African continent, he explains, is immersed in the supernatural. "Only recently, the African press reported on the sacrifice of albino children". From the beginning, it was agreed that the writing of the series would be done by a team of people. A writing workshop was therefore created. They initially met more than 200 writers, to then keep five: Samantha Biffot, Olivier Messa, Augustin Ngom, Guy Foumane and Raymond Ngoh. Each writer was entrusted with writing one episode. Philippe Niang was with them throughout the entire writing process, his mission being, other than bringing his know-how, to help them express their voice, their originality.

Philippe Niang points out that the five screenwriters are all from different countries. Having said this, they all share three major traits: mastery of the French language, a collective imagination and a love of American series.

Alexandre Rideau explains that "Philippe Niang gave these young screenwriters a dream. He proved to them that they could take part in the development of a major international series and led them to write the first versions of the extremely exciting scripts". These versions were still too ambitious (in terms of sets, extras, filming locations...).

Alain Patetta was involved in reworking these initial versions, giving the series an overall coherence and a unique tone. He started on the project despite the fact that he knew absolutely nothing about Africa. "The initial scripts were astounding, they were full of ideas. My first

task was therefore to hone them in". Alain Patetta rewrote the series' bible and, with two screenwriters, reworked all the episodes by coming at it with production in mind (number of scenes, sets and characters). The idea was to add more methodology to the project, all the while keeping its DNA.

#### From writing to filming

Cécile Gérardin's mission was to give a boost to the series (development had begun in 2015). "A series is an equation of several unknowns. My job was to reduce the amount of unknowns". The most urgent thing was to find the two main actors. Cécile Gérardin had already met Issaka Sawadogo (actor in the *Guyane* series, produced by Bénédicte Lesage). He then introduced her to Yann Gaël. The two actors did some screen tests and were both offered the roles of Sakho and Mangane. "From that point onwards, everything fell into place". The project finally took off.

Jean-Luc Herbulot indicates that he was initially hired as a director. He quickly understood that, in order to ensure the series saw the light of day, he needed to take on the role of artistic director or 'showrunner'. This transition happened quite naturally. Jean-Luc Herbulot began his career in film; however, "the film director is the equivalent of a series showrunner". Indeed, in films, the director provides all the artistic direction, whereas in a series, they are often considered as a technician. Jean-Luc Herbulot takes the opportunity to thank Cécile Gérardin for all the creative freedom that she gave him. "It is very rare in television".

When asked about casting, Cécile Gérardin explains that aside from the two main actors, the majority of the roles were given to non-professional actors. Alexandre Rideau points out that despite the local actors' potential talent, West Africa does not have casting agencies per say. Moreover, aside from certain university workshops, training in acting is very rare. "Acting is not a job in Africa". Finding talent is therefore a true conundrum.

Ricky Tribord was given the highly important mission of prepping and training the hundred odd non-professional actors that took part in the series. He had already done this on *Guyane*. But the task turned out



to be more difficult on *Sakho and Mangane*, mainly due to a lack of budget. Alexandre Rideau would like to acknowledge Ricky Tribord who coached the actors every day of the week for 6 months.

#### Africa: a new market for series

To conclude, Bénédicte Lesage asks the team about budget. Alexandre Rideau explains that you never have the necessary amount of funds. Regardless, he is sure that new financing opportunities will come to Africa. Today, the African market is too young. CANAL+ covers 60 and 70% of the costs of the series. It is therefore a huge gamble for the channel. *Sakho and Mangane* will be broadcast across the African continent and should, as such, create energy around audiovisual content and open up the market to new productions. Beyond the financial aspect, the series was blessed with a real collective momentum.



#### SPEAKERS

**Gunnar Carlsson**, producer, Anagram Sverige

**Robert Samuelson**, Global Content Manager, Scripted, ITV Studios Global Entertainment

#### CHAIRED BY

**Dominic Schreiber**, consultant

#### CREDITS

Original idea: Gunnar Carlsson, Sara Heldt, based on a novel by Thomas Engström

Screenwriters: Sara Heldt, Donna Sharpe

Director: Barbara Eder

Production: Anagram Sverige AB, Network Movie

Producers: Gunnar Carlsson, Bettina Wente

Broadcasters: ZDF, SVT, Yle, TV Norway

Distributor: ITV Global

Cast: Wotan Wilke Möhring, Matthew Marsh, Michelle Meadows, Dona Croll, Cara Hogan, Anastasia Hille

Format: 6x45', 3x90', 2x115'

Date of broadcast: spring 2019

This international spy thriller, based on novels set in Berlin, was presented at Série Series 2017 at a much earlier stage. The team is back to unveil the first footage.

#### A contemporary spy thriller

Berlin 2014: Clive Berner, head of the CIA's Berlin station, who misses the good old times of the Cold War and Ludwig Licht, a former Stasi snitch who nowadays is his own best customer in his bar in Kreuzberg, want to arrest the head of a big whistleblowing network and hope to secure their different affairs with this. But it doesn't go according to plan...

The plot revolves around a former double agent who used to work for the Stasi and the CIA, who is called by his former CIA boss when he had completely abandoned that life. Does it still make sense to be a spy when the Cold War is finished?

The series is for the most part taking place in Berlin and is definitely aimed at an international market, English being the language spoken.

#### A co-production between Germany and Sweden

Dominic Schreiber asks Gunnar Carlsson if the English language and international aspect of the series has made it more complicated to

convince local Scandinavian broadcasters. Gunnar Carlsson confirms this, also saying that whereas a local show would have been easily co-financed by Nordic broadcasters, for this one, they had to get money from the buyers.

The project was born at Anagram (Sweden) and is co-produced by German company Network Movie. The main writer, Sara Heldt, is Swedish, and worked with British writer Donna Sharpe. ZDF put money into the series and it was also strongly supported by ITV Studios GE.

Dominic asks Robert Samuelson why a British distributor such as ITV Studios finds it interesting to invest in a Swedish series. What matters to them, Robert explains, is the most interesting content, no matter where it comes from. The only thing is that it had to be good for the international market. They are planning to launch *West of Liberty* during MIPCOM. It is a 6x45 and will air at some point in 2019.

# BEECHAM HOUSE

United Kingdom



Erica Motley apologises on behalf of Gurinder Chadha, the series' creator, writer and director, and Sarah Doole from FremantleMedia, who both had to cancel their visit last minute. She will present *Beecham House*, an upcoming epic saga from acclaimed filmmaker behind hits like *Bend It Like Beckham*, on their behalf.

#### An emotional epic period drama

19th century Delhi: former soldier John Beecham acquires Beecham House to start a new life for his family and a business as a trader. A wealthy and distinguished man, John has witnessed profiteering and exploitation during his time with the controlling East India Company and appears haunted by his past. Determined to escape that life, he sets his sights on becoming an honorable member of the trading community. But John's arrival provokes speculation and gossip amongst the servants and despite filling his residence with relatives and friends, Beecham's house still has dark corners that crackle with conspiracy, disharmony and sinister intent.

Choosing to focus on a period when the

British were not yet massively implanted in India (although the French were), Gurinder Chadha offers a different, earlier vision of colonial India.

A video message from Gurinder Chadha is screened. "I'm sorry I haven't been able to make it to Fontainebleau, but I have this big series to write, direct and produce for ITV". She explains that the series takes place before the British took over India and follows Englishman John Beecham who is doing his best to be good and behave well in India, despite the appalling behaviour of British companies that make it hard to remain moral. To her, the project is very modern and very important because most people don't understand the long relationship between India and the UK. "I hope to show a different version of history through the emotional life of John Beecham and his family."

#### The many talents of Gurinder Chadha

Gurinder is doing everything on the project. Erica reminds us that she started as a TV host and is a very impressive talent, who'll bring a cinematic look to this TV project.

#### SPEAKER

**Erica Motley, SVP of Co-Productions and Business Development, FremantleMedia**

#### CHAIRED BY

**Dominic Schreiber, consultant**

#### CREDITS

Creator, screenwriter, director: Gurinder Chadha  
Co-screenwriters: Paul Mayeda Berges, Shahrukh Husain, Victor Levin  
Production: ITV Drama (Polly Hill), Bend it TV (Gurinder Chadha, Caroline Levy)  
Broadcaster: ITV  
Distributor: FremantleMedia International

She had started developing the project as a feature film but while doing the research, she realised she had so much material that she could make a series. It could go on for many seasons, following John Beecham's descendants.

Gurinder made a beautiful visual brochure and sold it to Polly Hill at ITV with the brochure only, without even having a script yet. This is a very unusual decision for ITV.

She is writing the series with her American husband and with a showrunner from the USA. She wanted support as she had never done TV before, and she thought it would be interesting to have a foreign perspective on British history. The scripts for season 1 are now finished. Gurinder's idea is to make a mainstream story, giving an important place to women and diversity.

For now, the project has been held until there is footage. No pre-sale has been made, but pre-production will start this summer so there will be footage to show at MIP.

Erica shows images from Gurinder's trip to India and the different locations she found. They will be shooting in Jaipur and Delhi and in UK studios for interiors. Gurinder already knows crews in India, which makes things much smoother in terms of logistics.

They are currently casting but there is no news to announce yet. The series will be broadcast in 2019, with 6 episodes in season 1. They would love to do 60 episodes as they have 200 years to cover! Seasons 1 and 2 will cover two years, and then the story would jump to 25 years later to follow John's children in their adult life. Gurinder Chadha already has a very precise idea of the timeline.



# PINK FLAMINGO

France



Led by Virginie Sauveur and currently under development, *Pink Flamingo* follows the 20 year-long odyssey of a little girl who will become a man, as well as her father's path, who is fighting with his own femininity.

#### Transitions and family secrets

After 12 years in exile in Canada, Jules Rivière, a 30 year-old man, returns to his native South-West of France to find his father who has recently disappeared. His arrival will shatter the family's delicate equilibrium, especially as when Jules left, he was called Julie. What happened for Julie Rivière to change genders? We dive into the beginning of the odyssey, 20 years earlier.

The story of the transition from Jules to Julie, which takes place in three countries, is coupled with a mystery: it begins when Jules received a call from his mother telling him that his father has disappeared, so he decides to return to France to confront his family and find out what has happened to his father. The family secrets will be a central element to the series.

The narrative was initially going to follow a linear structure, starting with the hero's

youth, that we would find again at the age of 18 and then 28. But as the writing progressed, it seemed more relevant to break this construct, mainly to create a more mysterious aspect. Virginie Sauveur therefore decided to start the story with a man lost in a snowy mountain in Canada, who receives a mysterious call that would lead him back to his past and to return to his family, that he had left during his transition at 18 years old, but also the child he left at that time.

#### Representing transsexuality

The team worked with a transsexual consultant to build the character. One of the central ideas of the series, explains Virginie Sauveur, is to consider the question of gender through one simple question: what is an impossible love story in the 21st century? Today, age, social class, blending, are no longer important criteria for us; maybe nowadays the real question is about gender? Do we fall in love with a person or a gender? This question is addressed through our main protagonist's love for Giulia, a young heterosexual girl; once he has become a man, can Jules hope to win Giulia over?

#### SPEAKERS

**Virginie Sauveur**, creator, screenwriter, director  
**Matthieu Bernard**, literary director, Day for Night Productions  
**Fionnuala Jamison**, head of international sales, MK2 Films

#### CHAIRED BY

**Marie Muselaers**, co-CEO, Lumière Group

#### CREDITS

Original idea: Virginie Sauveur  
 Screenwriters: Virginie Sauveur, Raphaëlle Roudaut  
 Director: Virginie Sauveur  
 Production: Day for Night Productions  
 Producer: Jan Vasak  
 Broadcaster: ARTE France  
 Distributor: MK2 International  
 With: Christa Theret  
 Format: 6x52'  
 Date of broadcast: 2019

The relationship with the body was, of course, central to the project, which influenced Virginie Sauveur's choices, especially on defining the arena in which her story would unfold. Jules' father is obsessed with the corrida, and Virginie Sauveur explains that she decided this after stumbling upon images of bulls that she found very sensual, virile and intriguing.

The way the characters were portrayed was a key issue. Virginie Sauveur hesitated for a long time on which actors to cast, she considered working with a transsexual but finally changed as she did not want to help the viewers with accepting the masculinity. She wanted them to see the hero as female and follow his transition step by step without changing the actor.

When actress Christa Theret was put forward, she was the obvious choice. The team present test videos around Christa, as well as a mood reel of the project.

#### An international and universal series

Filming will start in 2019. The budget has not yet been confirmed, the team are aiming for 7 million euros and are still looking for co-producers. There are already co-producers from Quebec and Germany involved and conversation are underway in other countries, including Switzerland.

Matthieu Bernard emphasises that it is a true pleasure for him to work with Virginie Sauveur, who has a very strong relationship with the characters and who is putting a series forward which questions us on gender, identity, but also family. "Virginie is guiding us towards a very positive and bright series", he adds.

Virginie Sauveur claims to be carried by her hero and his strength: "I want to admire him, to look at him wide-eyed! Taking over control of his body demands an incredible inner strength". She concludes by saying that she hopes the series will soften our outlook on transsexuality.



## THE FAMILY

United Kingdom, Italy



*The Family* is a returning series about the history of Ancient Rome, created by writer Simon Burke, who is well known for *Fortitude*.

### A period drama guided by women

Authentic and based on true events, *The Family* starts with the story of Octavian, who broke the Roman Republic forever and founded a dynasty that would last for a century. But the story of Octavian and his successors will be told in a very specific way: through the eyes of the women surrounding them, as history has proven that they were often holding the reins of the empire behind the scenes.

30 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, Octavian takes over the entire empire and replaces the democracy by a dynasty. Amongst his successors are cruel, despotic emperors such as Caligula and Nero, who burnt the city of Rome down. Such crazy families are always a very good starting point for drama!

The idea of telling this story through the eyes of the women came later. The project started with Sky Italia who wanted to make a series telling the true story of Rome; they wanted it to be a gangster show, and to be very Italian. They guided the writer and producer through history. The more research they did, the more they realised that most decisions were actually guided by women backstage – which was definitely a very exciting discovery.

### The incredible destiny of Livia

Season 1 follows Octavian-Augustus' reign. His wife Livia is the leading character. Livia was born into fabulous wealth, but her family lost everything during the civil war; however, she managed to completely turn the situation around. She was only 15 years old when she caught

Octavian's attention, and convinced him to abandon his wife and children and to marry her. They made children, but as Octavian already had sons from his previous wife, they were not the first heirs to the throne. Livia then set in motion a 40-years plan to get rid of these sons, behind her husband's back.

Octavian's mother and sister, who tried to find out what kind of game Livia was playing, will be other strong characters for this season.

### Capturing the essence of Ancient Rome

The Rome that will be depicted in *The Family* is a Rome without the battles; but what will be essential is to capture the brutality of daily life, as well as the omnipresence of sexuality in society at that time. As the series will be made for premium pay TV, graphic violence and graphic sex won't be a problem.

The team did a lot of research and was struck by the mix of modernity and weirdness, with a lot of superstition, a strange attitude towards sex. In a way, history offers real insights into today's life in Italy.

A dense bible and a couple of scripts have now been sent to Sky Italia. Sky wants the series to be shot in English. The idea is, however, to have a European, diverse cast, representative of the countries from which the characters actually came from.

The series will be very expensive, but they may not need new international partners yet thanks to the strong involvement of Endemol Shine International. Discussions remain open, but it is important for them to involve the right partner at the right time.

### SPEAKERS

**Simon Burke**, creator, screenwriter

**Patrick Spence**, head of drama, Tiger Aspect and managing director, Fifty Fathoms

### CHAIRED BY

**Dominic Schreiber**, consultant

### CREDITS

Original idea: Simon Burke

Screenwriter: Simon Burke

Production: Fifty Fathoms Productions

Producers: Patrick Spence, Simon Burke

Broadcaster: Sky Italia

Distributor: Endemol Shine International

Format: 12 x 60'

### SPEAKERS

**Tiny Bertels**, creator, screenwriter

**Nathalie Basteyns**, screenwriter, director

**Pieter Van Huyck**, producer, De Mensen

### CHAIRED BY

**Jean-Marc Auclair**, screenwriter, producer, Alauda

### CREDITS

Country: Belgium

Original idea: Tiny Bertels

Screenwriters: Tiny Bertels, Nathalie Basteyns, Bart Uytdehaegen

Director: Nathalie Basteyns

Production: De Mensen

Producers: Pieter Van Huyck, Ivy Vanhaecke

Format: 8x50'

The speakers introduce themselves. Nathalie Basteyns is a writer and director and has made several series which were presented during previous editions of Série Series, such as *Clan* and *Beau Séjour*. Tiny is an actress who starred in *Beau Séjour* and *Chaussée d'amour*, a singer and a writer. They decided to write this project together with Nathalie. And Pieter is the head of the scripted department of De Mensen, one of the biggest production companies in Flemish Belgium.

### Giving a voice to the victims

When the partly Moroccan Zamira returns the luggage left behind to the victims after the attack on Zaventem Airport, she embarks upon the hardest job of her career. But even though Zamira comes up against prejudice, pride and sorrow, she keeps on trying to help everybody. However, in her blind determination she loses sight of one person: herself.

The plot is based on a real story and a real person. Nathalie explains that one day, Tiny came to her with an article about a half-Belgian and half-Moroccan federal police woman, who collected all the things left behind by the victims of the attacks at the Zaventem airport after the investigation was finished, and started looking for their owners. Some of them were dead, others had survived. This woman thought it was important to keep everything, even the broken things, which can have a deep meaning for the owners or their relatives, and help some people recover from trauma. She assigned to herself the mission of giving everything back.

Tiny and Nathalie were fascinated by this story and by this woman who knows how important the tiniest things can be.

### Turning facts into a series

Jean-Marc Auclair asks them about the series' structure. The things Zamira brings back constantly echo her own life and problems. This link is made more solid by the character's personal story: when her mother died, her father threw everything away, which was a trauma for her. This mission will be truly life changing for us.

The series will be a drama with lighter situations. The writers won't look for comedy, but there will necessarily be some hints of humour; you need humour to survive!

The project is in very early stages. It might become a 8 x 50'. A development convention has been signed with VRT but the series has not been fully commissioned yet. The team has committed to deliver the story's outline and a pilot script to VRT by the end of August.

## LOST LUGGAGE

Belgium



# MOLOCH

France



Arnaud Malherbe and Marion Festraëts are the writers behind the series *Chefs*, which aired on France 2 in 2015-2016, and was also produced by Xavier Matthieu for Calt Studio. Today they are presenting a very different project, between a thriller and fantasy, created by Arnaud and co-written by Marion.

#### A profound need for newness

A peaceful seaside town with grey, tentacular and labyrinthic walls. Which suddenly bursts into flames... In the subway, in the supermarket, in the street, random people violently, uncontrollably and inexplicably catching fire... Self-combustion? Suicides by self-immolation? Pyrotechnic homicides? Louise, a young trainee from the local newspaper, takes on the investigation.

Arnaud explains that *Moloch* is a project that stems from his experience on *Chefs*: a series which he and Marion are proud of, but that has its limits, and lead him to think about what kind of series he now wanted to write. What stories did he want to tell, and how?

Arnaud began writing *Moloch* without wondering whether it would get made; it was almost a game, or at the very least he wanted to live up to expectations of creating a drama worthy of the name, going with idea that this series would only exist for him. But once he pitched the idea to Xavier Matthieu, during a conversation, he was immediately on board.

#### Moloch, between mystery and fear

The project is built on the desire to arouse fear in the viewer, to touch on something important within them, just like with laughter does. It fuels itself on the writers' desire for the genre, a longing to navigate in troubled worlds, but also an unconscious obsession with what is currently happening in France, in our terrorised society in which everyone feels vulnerable.

This was how the concept for the series was born: an ordinary day, in an ordinary town, a man is waiting for the metro, he enters the carriage, people are looking at him strangely, he feels odd, and suddenly his entire body catches fire like a human torch. This phenomenon then happens to several other people. Each time, a mysterious Moloch leaves his signature on the scene of the events.

The main characters are a trainee journalist at the local newspaper, ready for anything, and an empathetic psychiatrist at the hospital. Louise feels that she has found the case that will bring her success, Gabriel hopes to find out what happened to his son who died in the flames several years previously. A daily and random terror settles in society. Who is Moloch?

#### Implementation

Xavier was instantly excited by the project. Together with Arnaud, they presented a ten-page document to ARTE, who quickly accepted the project. Arnaud wrote, between the two seasons of *Chefs*, a pilot and the storylines, which were then heavily reworked, notably when Marion joined the project.

For them, this fantasy thriller offered the possibility to try things that they had never tested. Marion and Arnaud wrote all the texts together.

The series is a 6 x 52'. Currently, they have two scripted episodes and four very detailed treatments.

The visual intentions are already clear in Arnaud's mind, who will direct the series, as shown in the selection of images he prepared for Série Series. The idea is to put the intrigue in an undetermined town, which is believable without being real. Le Havre was initially considered for the shoot, but will now take place in Antwerp. Filming will begin mid-March 2019.

#### SPEAKERS

**Arnaud Malherbe**, creator, screenwriter, director  
**Marion Festraëts**, screenwriter  
**Xavier Matthieu**, producer, Calt Studios

#### CHAIRED BY

**Jean-Marc Auclair**, screenwriter and producer, Alauda

#### CREDITS

Country: France  
Original idea: Arnaud Malherbe  
Screenwriters: Arnaud Malherbe, Marion Festraëts  
Director: Arnaud Malherbe  
Production: Calt Studio  
Producer: Xavier Matthieu  
Broadcaster: ARTE  
Format: 6x52'

#### Implementation

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#### SPEAKERS

**Tomás Baldýnský**, creator, screenwriter  
**Tomáš Chvála**, screenwriter  
**Jan Maxa**, Head of programme development, Czech Television

#### CHAIRED BY

**Jean-Marc Auclair**, screenwriter and director, Alauda

#### CREDITS

Original idea: Tomás Baldýnský  
Screenwriters: Tomás Baldýnský, Tomáš Chvála, Jakub Votýpka, Petra Soukupová  
Production: Czech Television  
Producer: Jan Maxa  
Broadcaster: Czech Television  
Distributor: Czech Television  
Format: 6x90'  
Date of broadcast: 2021

#### Keeping the hierarchy

Jan Maxa oversees content development at Czech Television. He is the creative producer for *Sherlock '84*.

Tomás Baldýnský is the series' creator, showrunner and head writer. Besides screenwriting, he is also a film critic, a journalist, and has worked for the Czech Film Fund. This position gives him more power on his projects than what Czech screenwriters usually get. To him, all screenwriters should be able to have a similar lead on their projects.

Tomás Chvála is co-writing *Sherlock '84*. "I'm working with Tomás [Baldýnský] because nobody wants to do it", he says, joking. He is very aware that this is Tomás' show and that he is there to help him, but also to respect his decisions. They both agree that their collaboration is very fruitful: "Tomás [Chvála]'s ideas help me a lot, and he has the big quality of giving his best even when it is not his own show."

# SHERLOCK '84

Czech Republic



1984. A six-part miniseries in which a Sherlock-like character plays a complicated game with the totalitarian police. While letting them use his uncanny detective powers for solving criminal cases, he secretly tries to solve the mystery of his own identity and to win the ultimate prize: his freedom.

#### A bit of context

Jan Maxa gives an overview of the Czech market. It is split between three big players that hold 90% of the viewing shares: 2 commercial broadcasters, Prima and Nova; and the public broadcaster, Czech Television.

In terms of content, the TV market is heavily oriented towards drama. The commercial broadcasters produce cheap drama very successfully. Czech Television produces 120 hours of drama a year. The most successful genre is crime; a good rating for a series in prime time would be around 20%.

#### Implementation

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They explain how they are working together. They sit facing a wall; Tomás Baldýnský writes on his computer and what he writes is screened on the wall. When he hits an obstacle, they discuss it and find a solution. Therefore, most of the time, Tomás Chvála doesn't write himself.

#### A mysterious, tragic Sherlock

Tomás Baldýnský realises how lucky he is: "they are letting me write this story even though I can't even pitch it!"

The series is a 6 x 90', taking place in 1984, under the communist regime. A mysterious man ends up in a mental asylum because he lost his memory and forgot his identity. In order to get it back, he becomes "Sherlock". But the police soon finds out that he is a genius and that he can help them solve crimes; he starts doing it, sometimes willingly, and sometimes because he is forced to. He has his own personal quest: finding out who he is.

The project started out as a comedy, and from a very trivial starting point: while he was shooting the space comedy *Kosmo* (presented at Série Series 2016), Tomás Baldýnský looked at two of his actors and, thinking that they looked like Sherlock and Watson, he decided to write a show for them.

But when he started writing the comedy, he felt very sad for his characters, whose situation is actually quite pathetic, even tragic. So he realised that it had to become darker, and adopted a tragic-romantic tone.

"My idea is that this project won't ever go to production! But Jan says I'm wrong.", says Tomás Baldýnský. Jan Maxa confirms: one script is already in a very final version and Czech TV is in talks with Germany. So, it definitely looks like the series will be made; although it might not be ready next year!

# THE MINISTER

Iceland



This project is a political thriller set in Iceland, with a special touch, as it is also a story on mental illness. As the Prime Minister's bipolar disorder worsens, his team and allies are forced to endanger both the stability of the government and their private lives, some to hide the illness - others to abuse it.

#### A bipolar world?

Jónas Margeir Ingólfsson details the series' ambition. This is a series about a fictional Icelandic Prime Minister who suffers from bipolar disorder. But isn't politics in itself a crazy and bipolar arena? We keep voting for people and politics that we then disagree with and oppose; and you definitely have to be on the brink of insanity to decide that YOU are the person who should lead the whole nation.

In 2013, Jónas, Björg and Birkir decided to make a series about that. Over the past few years, their ideas have often been surpassed by reality! Jónas shows a few examples of headlines and articles about Trump and other current politicians.

According to him, not only politics but

our entire Western societies are based on bipolar mechanisms, in particular in economy (prosperity vs crisis). And, he adds, Iceland is a particularly bipolar country: the sun is either never up or never down, volcanos sit next to glaciers...

**When the Prime Minister goes insane**  
Björg Magnúsdóttir depicts the series' main character more precisely. Benedict is a young, progressive man, elected as Prime Minister in a pessimistic and skeptical climate in Iceland. Benedict brings new hope: he is different from other politicians, he promises to stand with his nation and to fight against corruption; he is also a charming and enthusiastic person who enjoys the small things in life. He's the leader all of us would vote for!

Episode 1 starts with his victory. But what nobody knows then, even him, is that he suffers from severe mental illness: an undiagnosed bipolar disorder. From his election to the end of season 1, he will suffer several manic and depressive episodes, with unpredictable effects on himself, on his family and on the nation.

#### SPEAKERS

**Birkir Blær Ingólfson**, co-creator, screenwriter  
**Björg Magnúsdóttir**, co-creator, screenwriter  
**Jónas Margeir Ingólfsson**, co-creator, screenwriter

#### CHAIRED BY

**Dominic Schreiber**, co-creator, screenwriter

#### CREDITS

Original idea: Björg Magnúsdóttir, Birkir Blær Ingólfsson, Jónas Margeir Ingólfsson  
Screenwriters: Björg Magnúsdóttir, Birkir Blær Ingólfsson, Jónas Margeir Ingólfsson  
Directors: Nanna Kristín Magnúsdóttir, Arnór Pálmi Arnarson  
Production: Sagafilm  
Producers: Anna Vigdís Gísladóttir, Thorhallur Gunnarsson, Hilmar Sigurðsson, Kjartan Thor Thordarson  
Broadcaster: RÚV  
Format: 8x45'  
Date of broadcast: 2019/2020

The person dealing with this most closely is his wife Steinunn, a gracious woman who comes from a wealthy and powerful political family, which she hates. She is a media owner. She convinces Benedict that he must not tell anybody about his disorder if he wants to stay in power. But she sinks them further into the maze of lies and it eventually leads to her getting blood on her hands.

Hrefna is a hard working woman and Benedict's personal assistant, a position which progressively turns into a nightmare. How far can she go? She is married to Grímur, who is also Benedict's closest ally, and who has to choose between helping him and throwing him out to take his position; or could he do both?

Rikardur is Benedict's father, a priest living up North. His wife was also bipolar and she committed suicide, and he is determined not to let the same thing happen to his son.

All the characters are seen in a three dimensional way, none of them are black and white. The main question carrying the series and the main reason why the writers created Benedict is: what happens when someone we love goes insane?

#### It takes time to find the right tone

Season 1 will have 8 episodes. The writing process has already taken nearly 5 years, and it is not over. Many questions have been raised throughout this journey: how to make the difference between brilliance and insanity? Can a mentally ill person be a good leader?

Birkir Blær Ingólfson tells a bit more about the mood of the series. The series starts on a very realistic tone, but the rules of realism will then be progressively broken. We will spend more and more time in Benedict's head, and the visual aspect of the series will adapt to his changing mood: for instance, the colours will be brighter when he is in a manic phase. Birkir also illustrates this in a specific scene: Benedict is attending a parliamentary session but is actually writing a musical, and a group

of musicians appears to play his song while the discussion goes on, turning the session into chaos; but when Benedict is called on stage, the musicians suddenly vanish and he delivers a brilliant speech.

It is important to stress that the project is not a comedy, even though people often tend to think so. The writers want to focus on tragedy. There will be some humour in the beginning but we will soon realise that what we thought was funny, isn't.

They hope to start shooting next year. They are already casting and feel very lucky about the Benedict they found: Ólafur Darri Ólafsson, who is one of the greatest Icelandic actors and has starred in a film by Spielberg, in *True Detective*, in *Trapped*...

For the three writers, this is their first series. It has been a long and exciting journey, that started when Björg and Jonas, who had both recently seen *Borgen*, decided to write a political show, inspired by a bipolar friend of Jonas'. With Birkir, they went to Sagafilm who decided to produce it. "This is when we got really scared and started typing 'What is a synopsis' on the Internet". But Sagafilm held their hand throughout the process and it went as smoothly as possible.



# SOIL

Belgium



© Karel Dierckx

If a Muslim passes away in Belgium, he burdens his relatives with a dilemma. "Do we bury him here or in his native country?" That's the starting point for *Soil*, a series created by three standup comedians and currently in development.

bring dead people to the airport. When they visit their sick brother-in-law, they come up with this crazy idea: starting a business of Moroccan soil.

The three writers did not know where this concept would take them or what form it would take, but what they knew is that it was socially relevant. Of course, humour comes naturally with this absurd idea; but it is first a story about death, which is not always funny.

#### A moral impact

Before knowing precisely what form the project would take, the creators talked to many people. They heard heart-breaking stories, and it appeared essential to include a dramatic perspective. For instance, they read a story about a couple who lost their little daughter; under family pressure, she was buried in their homeland, but the mother secretly repatriated her body to keep her closer. "What could be done to help those people?" was one of the questions behind the project.

This idea first came from Zouzou Ben Chikha, and from his observation of a factual social phenomenon: in Belgium, 90% of the Muslims who die get repatriated to their homeland. When someone dies, this dilemma systematically comes up. For Zouzou, it also has a personal echo: one day, his parents told him "when you die, you will be buried in Tunisia with your family", which sounded quite shocking to his Flemish wife!

Rachid and Ismael, the two heroes, work for their father's repatriation business and

They also interviewed people working in the repatriation business; a progressive

imam who loved their idea; but also a less progressive imam who tried so hard to convince them that it was extremely important to repatriate people, that in the end they didn't dare tell him about their idea. Thus they realised that the project had a controversial aspect for many people and that the story would have to be carefully told.

Moreover, it is also a story about ambition, about a young man who wants to escape his boring life and thinks it will be a great financial opportunity. But of course, nothing will go to plan.

They spent a whole year figuring out how they would tell the story that they wanted to tell.

#### Lumière's first original series

Marike Muselaers and Jan De Clercq then joined the project.

Zouzou and Dries pitched the project to Jan last March. Jan called back their agent to say he was interested; but he told them that they had visited all the producers in Flemish Belgium! Lumière finally got the project. The writers said they would need two years for writing, which sounded a bit worrying for the producers; but in the end, they all agree it was for the best.

It is the first real original series produced by Lumière. They are mostly known for distribution, and moved to co-production a while ago. Now, they want to develop their own productions.

The project has a commercial broadcaster, VIER. This is actually quite adventurous, as an edgy series like this one would fit perfectly the editorial line of public broadcaster VRT Canvas, but might be a bit more controversial and unexpected on a commercial channel. They hope to see the series on TV in 2020.



# SURVIVORS

Italy



*Survivors* is a project developed by a very new writing team from a training scheme supervised by the Rai. It was born in a training programme taking place in Perugia and co-financed by the Rai, which offers to young writers 6 months in a villa with long masterclasses from skilled Italian talents and international guests.

#### A high-concept mystery series

Six passengers on a sailing boat, lost at sea, are found after a year adrift. Those who waited for them want to start their lives again like nothing happened, but discover that the survivors have changed profoundly and hide a terrible secret.

The series is driven by two big questions: why did those passengers come back and not the other ones, and what happened on the boat?

The young writers wanted to develop a high-concept project, taking inspiration from the international series they grew up with, such as *Lost*. Giovanni Galassi also mentions *Les Revenants (The Returned)* as an important reference: they are back, but they are not the same anymore. But they also wanted to tell the story "in an Italian way".

In the beginning, the point of view is that of the survivors' relatives who, having all but completely lost hope, are reunited with the disappeared ones, but find them deeply changed. So it is for the most part a relational drama based on mystery. Later on, the series also takes us on the boat to discover what happened, and what kind of society they re-created there.

It is a complex story with two timelines, which requires specific writing skills.

#### From school to screen

According to Michele Zatta, this is one of the Rai's role: spotting new talents who want to tell stories, give them the required tools and skills, and finally, help them penetrate the market.

The Rai is pushing boundaries, trying to be more daring and innovative. They want to bring youngsters back, and Michele Zatta is convinced that giving the opportunity for young people to tell their stories is a solution. Spotting and training talent and following them through their career has been a priority for the Rai for a while.

This was the very first project for Giovanni and his 3 peers. They have been accompanied by more experienced writers, such as Viola Rispoli, who is an alumni of the Rai's training program.

Viola joined the project approximately one year ago, when a bible was written. She thought the concept was great. Together, they started working hard in a writers' room to build this story which has many characters (18 people or so on the boat, 6 or 7 survivors, the relatives...)

It is a realistic series, there is no fantasy element; what happens to them could happen to anyone; and everyone would react differently. This was what they wanted: to show a diversity of reactions.

Season 1 will have 12 episodes. Today, there are 12 stories, the pilot is almost written, and the team will start writing the 11 others in September. There are 6 writers, so the process could go quite fast. They would like to start production next year; the series is produced by Romeo Drive.

Michele Zatta notes that they are already thinking of season 2 as they have to know how season 1 ends. The end will answer some questions but will also raise other ones. They would like to have just one year between the two seasons, which means they have to work together and to write season 2 during the shooting of season 1.

#### SPEAKERS

**Viola Rispoli**, Head writer  
**Giovanni Galassi**, screenwriter  
**Michele Zatta**, producer, Rai Fiction

#### CHAIRED BY

**Dominic Schreiber**, consultant

#### CREDITS

Original idea: Sofia Bruschetta, Ivano Fachin, Giovanni Galassi, Tommaso Matano  
Screenwriters: Viola Rispoli, Massimo Bocchini, Sofia Bruschetta, Ivano Fachin, Giovanni Galassi, Tommaso Matano  
Production: Rai Fiction, Rodeo Drive  
Producers: Marco Poccioni, Marco Valsania  
Broadcaster: Rai  
Distributor: Rai  
Format: 12x50'  
Date of broadcast: to be confirmed



#### SPEAKERS

**Mikko Pöllä**, co-creator, screenwriter, producer  
**Aleksi Salmenperä**, co-creator, screenwriter, director  
**Anna Zackrisson**, director  
**Stefan Baron**, producer, Nice Drama  
**Anna Croneman**, head of drama, SVT  
**Jarmo Lampela**, head of drama, Yle

#### CHAIRED BY

**Dominic Schreiber**, consultant

#### CREDITS

Original idea: Mikko Pöllä, Aleksi Salmenperä, Roope Lehtinen  
Screenwriters: Mikko Pöllä, Aleksi Salmenperä, Laura Suhonen, Björn Paquilin  
Directors: Aleksi Salmenperä, Anna Zackrisson  
Production: Nice Drama, Fire Monkey  
Producers: Roope Lehtinen, Stefan Baron, Sonja Hermele  
Broadcasters: SVT, Yle  
Distributor: DRG  
Format: 8x45'  
Date of broadcast: autumn 2020

*The White Wall* is a sci-fi series rooted in the real world, and is also the first co-production between Finland and Sweden.

#### From environmental matters to mystery

The world's largest final depository for nuclear waste is about to be opened in Northern Sweden when a deadly accident happens deep underground. The mining crew hits a giant white wall, made of material not known to man. What is it? Should they leave it alone or try to break it open?

The idea first came to Aleksi Salmenperä when he saw a documentary on a mine 10 years ago. When you bury nuclear waste, how do you make sure that it will be kept safe for hundreds of thousands years, how do you send the right message to the next generations?

It is a science-fiction story but which is deeply rooted in the small personal stories of the characters, in their daily lives. The main focus point is how the characters react to this mystery and to the dilemmas facing them.

#### A Finnish-Swedish co-production

From this initial source of inspiration, Aleksi started writing the story once in a while, between the feature films he was making. After approximately 6 years, he took the project to Mikko Pöllä who had more experience in TV, he came aboard, and the project went on. Mikko is producing but also contributes to the writing.

The project was pitched to Stefan Baron in December 2016, and then to SVT and Yle in April 2017. It was commissioned in April 2018. Shooting will start mid-November. It will be shot in Finland because of tax breaks, even though the story takes place in Sweden. Yle accepted to come aboard even though the series is for 90% taking place in Sweden and in Swedish.

# THE WHITE WALL

Sweden, Finland



The teams hope the series will be on air in spring 2020. DRG is distributing and currently pre-selling.

The international collaboration has been working well. They alternate between working separately in their own country, and together. The writers write in English, then the scripts are translated.

#### Reacting to extreme situations

The broadcasters were convinced by the balance between science and emotions, between mystery and real life. Anna Croneman explains that the combination of three aspects convinced her: an intriguing plot, the challenge of nuclear waste which really matters nowadays and a beautiful love story.

It is a universal story of ordinary people trying to find their way in extreme situations. It has a strong concept and strong characters depicted in a challenging situation and in dilemmas such as science vs religion. Jarmo Lampela says that from the very first meeting he wanted to make the project happen, even though its scale was quite scary. 60% of the budget comes from the broadcasters.

The shooting itself is a big challenge, as Anna Zackrisson explains. They will shoot in Europe's biggest mine, which is about to close, and which is very deep. The conditions will be complicated and quite extreme, but this is also inspiring. In addition to that, they have chosen to shoot during winter, as a snowy atmosphere will contribute to creating a mysterious world.

But Stefan Baron is positive: there will be a second season!

# SPOTLIGHT ON TRAILERS BY SÉRIE SERIES

## CHAIRED BY

Caroline Palmstierna, production and distribution consultant, Shoot For the Moon (Sweden)

The Spotlight on Trailers by Série Series is a call for projects, launched in 2015, that offers the possibility for European creators to present a project via a 2 minute trailer, in the hope of finding partners and financing. This year, the Série Series editorial committee has selected 9 projects, which will be presented by their teams during this session.

Caroline Palmstierna opens this third edition of Spotlight on Trailers by Série Series and speaks of the quality and diversity of the projects selected.

Fiona Bélier, from the Fabrique des Formats, thanks Série Series for enabling the Fabrique to be a partner of the Spotlight on Trailers. The Fabrique des Formats supports the development of formats via training, support and, thanks to its investment fund, helping productions shoot a trailer or pilot. Two of the nine projects will be picked by the jury of the Fabrique, offering them support as well as an investment of up to €80,000 and 50% of the budget of the pilot.

## LUCKY BASTARDS – NORWAY

Aleksander Herresthal, producer, Seefood TV  
Christoffer Lossius, screenwriter and director

4 youngsters who've messed up nearly everything in their lives finally find success by leading a criminal life. *Lucky Bastards* is the story of those who fail at everything they do, until they discover the crime world.

This original theme comes from a late night discussion in between the creators, during which they talked about the consequences there could be if they themselves decided to get into crime. The series is also inspired by offences and crimes committed in Norway: scams, fraud...

The team is looking for national or Scandinavian partners and investors. They are also hoping to film two versions: English-speaking and Norwegian-speaking. They are in contact with several local broadcasters,



## MEET YOUR FAKER – AUSTRIA

Lisa Terle, screenwriter  
Ursula Wolschläger, producer, Witcraft

The main character of this series is a journalist who was made to write an article on a story that ended up not being true, about an Iraqi refugee accused of rape. The man in question was murdered after the article was published.

Because of the manipulation she was a victim of, she starts researching and it leads her to the deepest, darkest State secrets. Beyond the plot, it is a series about "fake news", so a particularly contemporary one.

This is an international series looking for an English-speaking or European broadcaster, as well as a foreign co-producer. The plot is set in Austria and is currently being written.

## FIGHTBACK – SLOVAKIA

Michaela Kralova, artistic producer, Piknik

It all starts in Bratislava, before the declaration of the Republic of Slovakia. The series follows the beginnings of the founder of Krav Maga, the famous martial art used by Israeli forces. It tells the story of this at first completely unknown, fascinating man and the birth of the martial art.

The series is currently being written and the team is looking for co-production opportunities.

The initial format is 3 x 50', but the storyline can be stretched over a larger number of episodes considering the richness of the story being told.

## GAMBA GYM – FRANCE

Sophie Tavert Macian, screenwriter and director  
Jérémie Chevret, producer, Plus de Prod

Fifteen year old Julie has just moved to Saint-Denis from the Reunion. She dreams of a meteoric rise to fame and the 2020 Olympics, until she is injured and is the victim of an attempted sexual assault by the federation's doctor. She then faces an impossible choice: speak up or

shut up? Put gymnastics or her own well-being first?

The series is about upheaval and harassment. It expands on Julie's story by studying the shockwave this attempted harassment causes around her. *Gamba Gym* plays on the contrast in between the heavily publicised sports and showman world and the locker-room, the wings where the truth really comes out. How does a young girl in this situation choose to stay quiet and put competition first?

The series is in the first stages of writing. The trailer is therefore a "moodboard" of visual and documentary research done around the series.

It will be a 3x52 mini-series. The director would like to offer the main part to a gymnast to showcase the sport. The team is looking for a broadcaster as well as funds to develop the screenplay.

## LIVE – FRANCE

Jean-Marie Marchaut, creator, screenwriter

Jean-Marie Marchaut, an ex-journalist, wrote this series to show that there is a price to freedom of speech. It is a human cost, paid by the journalist, the interviewee, or even the audience.

The main character is a young man, a recent graduate from journalism school, who tries to find his place in this world. Full of good intentions and moral principles learnt at school or from his "white knight of journalism" father, he soon learns in the field that reality is not so black and white.

It is a drama series, in keeping with *The Minister*: it's about finding the drama in reality. Jean-Marie is also inspired by his own life as a journalist and stories he has lived through but up til now has never transcribed.

He is looking to find a producer as well as extending his network in order to develop his series.



**MILLE ADLER – FRANCE**

Sarah Malléon, creator and screenwriter  
Thomas Mazingue, creator and screenwriter

Irene Adler is one of the most important characters in the Sherlock Holmes universe, even though she is only seen in a few of the stories.

In the series, she left her life as the “thief of a thousand faces” five years earlier to go to Paris, get married and work as an antiques dealer. That is, until the French secret services track her down and ask her for help.

The series will be 6 episodes of 50 minutes and is a detective comedy destined for a large audience.

The project is already supported by a French production company but they are looking for foreign partners and broadcasters and are at the very start of the project. The next step is to write and shoot the pilot, so they are also looking for a director. In terms of casting, they had Cécile de France or Audrey Fleurot in mind to play Mlle Adler, but are open to British or American actors.

**PITY FUCK – GERMANY**

Raquel Stern, creator, screenwriter, director

The series opens on Gabi being dumped and realising all the men she's shared her life with were selfish and didn't deserve her. So she decides to put this realisation to good use and serve society by being the “pity fuck”: offering up her body so that others may feel better.

It is a comedy with real dramatic potential as it follows a young lady looking for her place in a big city and is a real look into empathy. The common thread is Gabi's state of mind and her character's evolution in Berlin.

The series is described by its writer as quick, refreshing and feminine. The ideal format for Gabi's evolution would be 6x25 or 30'.

**PATRIA – FRANCE, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

Mahamadou Fadiga, artistic director  
Yurandy Sodre, director

When his daughter is murdered in broad daylight, an almost retired general comes to realise that his island, Patria, is in a dreadful state due to corruption. So he decides to take things into his own hands. But how? By fighting fire with fire. Thanks to the narco-trafficker's money, he bribes politicians to get laws passed. He throws himself into the fray, convinced he can fix all the problems alone... of course, he is wrong.

*Patria* differs from series like *Narcos*, because the hero has a story and principles beyond his drug trafficking. He is driven by something that goes far beyond simple “business”.

6 of the 10 episodes are already written, and a new writing session will start in August. Each episode will last an hour. Talks are under way with broadcasters, who are especially interested in the pan-South American aspect of the project (which has a Dominican co-producer); the team is in contact with Chilean consortium Atomica. They are still looking for a third of the budget (1.5 million dollars).



## ON THE PROGRAMME OF THE FIRST EDITION OF SÉRIE SERIES KIDS:

- **Akissi**, presented by Marguerite Abouet (screenwriter) and Angelin Paul (producer)
- **Angelo Rules**, Angelo Rules, presented by Anastasia Heinzl (screenwriter)
- **Arthur and the Minimoys**, presented by Pierre-Alain Chartier (réalisateur)
- **Fresh Out of School**, presented by Cynthia Calvi, Jean-Baptiste Peltier (directors), Delphine Maury and Emmanuel Ryz (producers, Tant Mieux Prod)
- **Find Me in Paris**, presented by Stéphane Martinet (Commission du Film Ile-de-France)
- **Mily Miss Questions**, presented by Cilvy Aupin (producer, Ciel de Paris)
- **My knight and me**, presented by Joeri Christiaen (director) and Haiet Lakhouache (production manager, TeamTo)
- **Zip Zip**, presented by Johanna Goldschmidt (screenwriter) and Emmanuel de Franceschi (producer)
- **And dubbing workshops** presented by Gulli around Arthur and the Minimoys

Série Series created several different debate formats in order to offer inspiring insights to professionals. It also enables them to analyse the creation of series and its market as well as developing a clearer vision of the challenges of the sector.

Masterclasses give creators a platform to share their experiences and work methods.

*One Vision* gives a renowned figure 20 minutes to express their opinions on a theme relating to the place of series in our lives.

Debates and round tables allow everyone to better understand the evolutions of the sector.

This year, Série Series also invited university professors to share their analysis in order to take a step back and examine the place of series in our society.

Furthermore, with the Broadcaster's Conclave and *Series Stories*, Série Series offers, to both heads of drama channels on the one side and creators on the other, small committee workshops, allowing them to collectively think about the concrete challenges and issues they are faced with on a daily basis.



## CHRIS LANG

WRITER, PRODUCER, ACTOR

CHAIRED BY

Nicola Lusuardi, screenwriter and consultant

Nicola Lusuardi welcomes Chris Lang, a screenwriter whose worldwide reputation precedes him, to the stage. After earning his stripes working on traditional British series - *The Bill* (for which he received an award from the British Screenwriter's Guild), *Casualty*, *Soldier Soldier* - he created his own original series for ITV in 2000, *The Glass*, with John Thaw and Sarah Lancashire in the title roles. He has since written many episodes of various series: *Tunnel*, *Torn* (nominated for an RTS award), *Amnesia* (nominated for an Edgar), *A Mother's Son* (nominated for a Broadcast award). He also created several series, such as *Innocent* and *Unforgotten*. A few of his works were adapted into French: *Tu es mon fils*, *Entre deux mères*, *Quand je serai grande je te tuerai*.

### From laughter to tears

For several years now, Chris Lang has been one of the masters of the thriller. When reading his biography, however, Nicola Lusuardi was very surprised to find out that he had started his journey in comedy, a genre he is rarely associated with. Yet, he seemed to be quite successful at the time and could clearly have gone down the comedy route. So why did he give it up?

Chris Lang explains that he "fell into writing comedy accidentally". He started his career as an actor. After studying at RADA for three years, he joined a classical theatre company. Most of the time, he is given minuscule roles. Bored in the backstage, he started writing comedy sketches with a fellow actor. What started as a hobby, a way of killing time, became his bread and butter. Almost overnight, he found himself being hired by various comedians to come up with short sketches for their shows. He spent almost five years on comedy, until 1990, when

he did a 180 degree turn and wrote his first drama screenplay. He then went on to join the writing team on *The Bill* (a big crime series in Great Britain, broadcast on ITV from 1984 to 2010), starting a new career in thrillers.

However, Chris Lang thinks that comedy and thriller aren't opposite genres, far from it in fact. "In the end, they have the same objective: exploring the human condition and revealing its hidden truths". Although they require different techniques, comedies and thrillers both draw up a relatively similar portrait of humanity. In fact, in most of the pieces Chris Lang has written, the criminal elements are secondary. For him, the thriller is the framework that he uses to tell a story, the scope of which often goes much further than the purely criminal aspect and extends into other genres. The rules of a crime series are marvellous tools for a screenwriter. Firstly, it forces them to write a narrative structure that is closed (beginning - middle - end) and simple. The simplicity isn't a hindrance to the storyline. On the contrary, it gives the writer more freedom, enabling them to dig deeper into a person's psyche, into the deep and hidden parts. Quite often, the more fluid and simple the plot is, the more the characters and the themes explored are complex. In fact, in series written by Chris Lang, when the murder is monstrous, the culprit isn't simply a monster. He writes a complex person. In his dramas, murderers commit their crimes because they are weak and terribly human. They are not pure evil.

Furthermore, writing a crime series offers the screenwriter certain specific pleasures they would get only rarely when writing a traditional comedy or drama. "I love writing the last two minutes of episodes,

the cliffhanger moment, the twist that no one had thought about”, confesses Chris Lang. Surprising the viewer is one of the most gratifying moments a writer can have. “Now, I can follow audience reactions on Twitter, so it’s instant gratification”. A good thriller relies heavily on the quality of its cliffhangers. The screenwriter’s job is to have the viewer hanging on every word, to get them hooked. On his audience, Charles Dickens had said “make them laugh, make them cry, make them wait”!

Chris Lang adds that for drama series, he often casts actors who are known for their comedic roles. Often, comedic actors have much better sense of timing than dramatic actors. Also, their acting is far more truthful. They easily embrace the truth of their character, without being afraid of unveiling all their facets, including the darker ones. On a more general note, comedy is probably the best school for a screenwriter. It teaches them, as it does actors, a sense of rhythm and the need to bring in a form of musicality into dialogue. For Chris Lang, a line of dialogue is composed like a song.

Chris Lang indicates that he hasn’t completely given up comedy. In fact, he recently wrote a romantic comedy for Netflix, which is a new original series produced in France and directed by Noémie Saglio. However, channels are only after thrillers now, which traps writers in that genre. Not only is broadcasters’ appetite for criminal (or medical) series insatiable, but nowadays they are the best tool channels have found to retain viewers.

#### Television, the land of opportunity

Nicola Lusuardi notes that Chris Lang started his career on the small screen and never left it. Why not move into cinema? Chris Lang replies that the piece that inspired him the most was *Play For Today*, a British anthology drama series with 325 episodes (from 50 to 100 minutes), produced and broadcast by the BBC from 1970 to 1984. Each episode was written by the biggest British writers, like Ian McEwan and John Osborne. Huge directors like Stephen Frears, Alan Clarke, Ken Loach and even Mike Leigh worked on the series. “I used to watch that series religiously. It made me want to work in television. I even told my wife recently that I wanted the title song to be played at my funeral”.

Chris Lang reminds us that television has always offered more opportunities than the film industry, especially in Great Britain. The British film industry is sensational - it regularly produces masterpieces -, but it is also desperately small. A writer can spend 10 years working on the screenplay of a film that will never see the light of day. Therefore, a writer has much more of a



chance of making it in the television industry.

Chris Lang points out that the 2010's marks a turning point. Television has earned its respect. Today, it holds the place that cinema held in the past. That's why the biggest names in film - Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese - moved over to television. The most interesting, ambitious and even epic stories (*Game Of Thrones*, for example), are today developed for the small screen.

Chris Lang also notes the important influence that Scandinavian series have had on the British audiovisual landscape. Series like *Broadchurch* and *Unforgotten* would never have seen the light of day had it not been for *The Killing* or *Borgen*. British writers have a lot to learn from European series. Chris Lang feels that series like *The Returned* - as clever as it is quirky - also opened up new creative pathways.

The evolutions that have taken place in the television industry over the last few years have created a lot of new opportunities. However, it means writers have to adjust. “Only five years ago, the new big platforms - Netflix, Amazon and Apple - had no influence on the British market. Today, they’re all we talk about”. Chris Lang feels optimistic. He thinks the advent of these new broadcasters demonstrates the British public’s appetite for series. “Let’s not forget that 15 years ago, a lot of people, especially in Great Britain, prophesied the end of series. This new golden age of TV series is incredibly exciting”.

#### About time

Nicola Lusuardi points out that the vast majority of crime series written by Chris Lang are about time. This is particularly prevalent in *Unforgotten*, all three series of which were broadcast in Britain on ITV.

Chris Lang explains that the series was based on a particularly traumatic true story which happened in Great Britain. The scandal broke out five years ago, as several public figures were accused of pedophilia. One of the accused was a famous TV presenter, probably one of the most loved of the last half century. “We all watched him on television. We grew up with him”. No one could believe that such a popular man could have sexually abused children with impunity, let alone for over 40 years. When he was arrested, he vehemently denied the allegations. Then, one month after he was arrested, he changed his plea - the evidence was too overwhelming -, admitting his misdeeds in public, to the news cameras.

“I was watching him on television, admitting the shameful truth. He wasn’t the man everyone thought he was. But when I watched this old man, who must have been 80 years old, his eyes were terrified and you could see his life disintegrating on the television. I couldn’t help but feel some sadness for him, despite what he had done. But I was also feeling terrible sadness for his wife, for his grown-up children, for his grandchildren, for his friends”. For over 40 years, this man had built a family, a career and friendships. “It’s like throwing a grenade into a life like that and watching it dismantle everything he had built in his life”.

#### A writer’s solitude

Finally, Nicola Lusuardi asks Chris Lang about his work and the methods he uses on a daily basis to write his series. He answers by explaining that the hardest part of the work is probably building the structure of a series. “As great as the idea or concept is, as great the characters are, as sharp the dialogue is, a series is nothing without a solid structure. The structure is the backbone of the series and has to be as robust as possible”. In that respect, the writing process is particularly laborious and depressing.

Chris Lang knows the anguish of a blank page all too well. A screenwriter, he says, should never give up. They should persevere. Of course, he sometimes finds himself at a dead end, but no problem is insurmountable. If he had to give a screenwriter any piece of advice it would be this: “Write anything, rather than nothing. There will be something you can come back to the following day”. Nothing is ever lost. Chris Lang admits to have written some terrible sketches at the start of his career, often for very unfunny people. Yet, all of it ended up being useful somehow. He not only learnt a sense of rhythm, but mostly how important it is to persevere. “Sometimes you’ve just got to pay the mortgage”.

Chris Lang adds that most of the time, he works alone. “I need calm and solitude to write”. For a series like *Unforgotten*, it took at least 2 months to come up with the narrative arc. He starts by defining the journey of the main characters, episode by episode. Then, he develops the elements to do with the investigation itself. Once he’s established this structure - it should read like a 40 page short story -, the writing process becomes a lot more agreeable. “We’re no longer working blind”, he concludes.



# PETER KOSMINSKY

SCREENWRITER, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER

CHAIRED BY

Anne Landois, screenwriter

WITH THE SUPPORT OF SACD

It is with great pleasure that Anne Landois welcomes Peter Kosminsky, author, screenwriter, director and producer, onto the stage. He is credited with some of the most engrossing TV dramas of the last 15 years, including: *Britz* on the 2005 London bombings, *The Promise* on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and *The State*, on new recruits of the Islamic State. All his works are based on true events. They are committed, rigorous and all the while accessible. Each of them cause controversy. While Peter Kosminsky is one of the most revered British television writers (he was awarded a Lifetime BAFTA Award for his contribution to television), his debut was somewhat difficult.

#### A steep learning curve

Peter Kosminsky joined the BBC in 1980, in the drama department, where he worked as a script editor. He felt like he was living the dream. Unfortunately, after only three months, he was dismissed on the basis of being completely incompetent. The BBC, having invested a certain amount in his training, decided to transfer him to the Current Affairs department as a researcher. Peter Kosminsky admits to having seen this as a kind of punishment. He had never written an article beforehand and had no interest in becoming a journalist. The first day, a few hours after starting his new job, he suggested a piece on VAT, specifically with regards to tampons and hygiene products. He found that menstrual products, despite being used by 50% of the population, were taxed as a luxury good. The subject was deemed as completely inappropriate – he clearly was not cut out for BBC One's prime time – and Peter Kosminsky was dismissed that same evening. The BBC then offered him a position as a director. He started off by directing 3-minute long segments for the daily show *Nationwide* (aired between 1969 and 1983). For 10



## THE ANTIDOTE TO SIMPLISTIC THINKING

years, he focused on making documentaries. But this journey through the world of news and documentaries was a diversion; he always knew he would return to his first love: drama.

#### The pen is mightier than the sword

Drama is the most powerful tool to reach a large audience and get them thinking about the tough questions. Peter Kosminsky has always loved covering subjects that are sensitive and controversial, and that tend to get a rise out of people. It is therefore no coincidence that an important part of his filmography is devoted to war, a fitting environment to explore the human condition. All his films, without exception, whether they are set during a war or not, deal with ordinary people put in extraordinary situations. In times of war, young men and women who have just left school and have most likely never left their hometown, are taken and transported, sometimes to the other side of the world, to a conflict where they will witness incredibly traumatic events.

When we interview families or friends of veterans, they all tell the same story: when someone comes back from war, they are completely changed. «They were 18 when they left, they seem to be 40 years old when they come back.» Experiencing war drastically and deeply affects the personality of those who lived it. Many are scarred for life, both physically and psychologically. Peter Kosminsky met with many veterans. They told him the most horrifying stories. A British army captain who fought in the Falklands war gave him a terrifying insight into conflict. He will never forget a Russian conscript's testimony about the Afghanistan war, describing the day he saw his best friend explode into a thousand pieces.

Peter Kosminsky is a pacifist. Despite some conflicts being inevitable – the Second World War, for example –, most are useless. They are most often the result of jingoistic impetus, shared by the population and by the young soldiers going to war. «It's not exclusive to the ruling elite». Peter Kosminsky's interest in the war is not a morbid fascination for blood and guns (he actually refuses to show violence on screen, favouring its surroundings), but an attentiveness to the effect it has on the people who live it. He sees his films as «an antidote to jingoism», a warning to governments to think before unnecessarily sacrificing a generation of young men and women in an unspeakable butchery.

#### Facing the facts

Peter Kosminsky wants to provoke and awaken consciences. But this desire for provocation is not his only motive. Actually, all his films rely on a rigorous research process. He spent more than eleven years writing *The Promise* and seven years working on *Warriors*. He can only embark on a project if he is passionate about the subject, or at least he does not lose interest during development.

Furthermore, Peter Kosminsky emphasises that all topics should be approached with the greatest openness possible, without any preconceptions. For example, he is currently writing a TV movie about the fire that occurred on June 14, 2017 in Grenfell Tower, a 24-storey social housing building in the North Kensington district of London. The research work is in progress and he has absolutely no idea what the conclusion of this drama will be.

In *The Promise*, he takes the viewer to the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the fate of Len, a British soldier stationed in Palestine in 1948. Although he is decidedly pro-Israel at the beginning of the film (he witnessed the liberation of Bergen-Belsen), he gradually moves in favour of the Palestinian cause. It is no surprise that this subject was controversial. Certain critics were particularly harsh (going as far as calling Peter Kosminsky anti-Semitic). Whereas in reality the series is the result of many years of research. He interviewed countless British veterans who were deployed to Palestine and their conclusions were universally typical: they arrived «pro-Jewish» and all left «pro-Arab». There was no other option than to show this reality, as unpleasant as it may be. He could have chosen to omit this fact and keep Len as pro-Israel at the end, but this would have been grossly misleading. He had to be faithful to the veterans' testimonies.

Peter Kosminsky does not consider himself a journalist. He explains

however, that the one obligation he has is to remain honest and faithful to the research, regardless of what the outcome may be. For example, there was a time when he had to hand the commission back (despite the broadcaster's frustration) as he felt the research was not leading anywhere. Peter Kosminsky invites writers to «go where the research leads you», as this can hold many surprises, revealing unknown events that take the story to a whole new direction.

When he began developing *The Government Inspector*, his main goal was to recount the death of British weapons inspector David Kelly. As a reminder, in September 2002, the United States, with the UK's support, decided to invade Iraq. As the British people were opposed to the war, Tony Blair pledged to release material proving that Saddam Hussein was leading a rearmament policy that was dangerous for both the UK and the world. However, as experts were unable to prove whether there were any arms of mass destruction, the government decided to strengthen their case by adding information that had not yet been confirmed: Iraq has the means to attack a country in less than 45 minutes! While the media were investigating the veracity of this information, David Kelly, one of the government experts, confessed to a BBC journalist – Andrew Gilligan – that the file was inflated. This case caused an outcry and a merciless conflict began between Tony Blair's cabinet and the BBC. David Kelly ended up being the main victim as he committed suicide on 18th July 2003. As Peter Kosminsky embarked on the project, he was siding with the BBC. He had always been against the war in Iraq, which he considered illegal. However, during his research, he found that Andrew Gilligan had not accurately transcribed the information David Kelly had given him and had actually altered it slightly. Had Peter Kosminsky wanted to make a pro-BBC film, he would have had to hide this incident, which obviously he refused to do.

Peter Kosminsky admits choosing certain subjects for very personal reasons. *Britz*, is, originally, a TV film about the London bombings in 2005 and the Muslim community in England. This, again very sensitive, subject was a way to tell the story of second-generation immigrants, these children born in England, that have British passports, who are nevertheless victims of the repressive laws voted for by Tony Blair's government. Peter Kosminsky himself is a second-generation immigrant. His mother, who was born in Vienna, went to Great Britain to flee the Nazis. Despite being born on British soil, he always felt different. On one hand, he longed to «be more British than the British» and to conform to society; on the other, paradoxically, he wanted to change everything and «overturn the apple cart».



It's by becoming aware of this ambivalence that the desire to tell the story through two different perspectives, one of a brother and one a sister, came to him; as if fiction would help him with his own internal conflicts. In *Britz*, Sohail, the brother, is enrolled in the ranks of the MI5, the British secret service. While he claims his place within the British community, his sister Nasima descends into radicalism. The two characters' experiences are not foreign to Peter Kosminsky. Like Nasima, he was very politically active as a student. He understands her anger. At the same time, he has always felt the same intense desire to integrate that Sohail feels.

Whatever the inspiration, Peter Kosminsky always uses the same rigorous method: starting from the facts to find, after a long investigation, the anecdotes which will feed the storyline. When it comes to drama, it's not about recreating real life, but rather ensuring that facts are told accurately. Then, once the characters have been created, they take control. They are not interchangeable and have their own personalities. They are the ones that lead the writing. Despite certain characters being fictitious, the events they face are very real.

#### **Engagement and freedom**

Peter Kosminsky is a deeply political writer. This runs through all his works; it is the driving force behind most of the main characters in his films and series. But beyond fiction, political engagement is for Peter Kosminsky a true profession of faith. This is evident when listening to the incredible speech he made at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) ceremony in May 2016. While on stage to receive the award for best Drama Series for the miniseries *Wolf Hall*, he made a brilliant speech defending the BBC. That year, the British government had announced its decision to take control of the public broadcaster. Acclaimed by the audience, Peter Kosminsky paid a heart-warming tribute to the public service and heavily criticised (the ceremony is broadcast live to approx. 8 million viewers) a policy that seemed unbearable to him as it would allow the state to dictate the BBC's editorial decisions. One could not expect any less from a free writer who has always used drama as a form of counter-power.



#### **Discussion with the audience**

When asked by Anne Landois about the format of the documents he presents to broadcasters, be it the BBC or Channel 4, to pitch a project, Peter Kosminsky admits that he no longer sends through a written document. Although he used to write very long and detailed treatments, he now does all of his presentations verbally. He realised that a verbal presentation is often far more productive as it enables him to look at someone directly in the eye. Having been a director for many years, he has learnt to read the expression on people's faces (mainly to watch the nuance of his actors' performances) and can therefore adjust his discourse, emphasising certain details depending on the commissioner's reaction. This method has enabled him to understand the broadcasters' expectations. He's actually learnt to identify the channel that seems to him the most suitable depending on the subject matter of the series. Having a first look deal with Channel 4, he has an obligation to take any of his own ideas to them first, however he knows that they are on the look-out for mischievous material that will "make noise". BBC One will be more mainstream, with a public service element. BBC Two will be more daring and intellectually challenging. When Peter Kosminsky has a project in mind, he instinctively knows which channel will be most likely to give him the green light.

Peter Kosminsky decides to switch up the traditional Q&A and questions the audience on the current state of television in France. During a dinner, several people explained that it would be impossible get works such as *Britz* and *Warriors* made; French television, or more specifically the main broadcasters, are too afraid of controversy. An audience member responds by explaining that French television does not see itself as a counter-power. The BBC's governance is independent to government, whereas the French public service has never been. Another audience member, a director, puts the responsibility on the broadcasters. They refuse to take any risks, notably those in the public service. Creators are constantly presenting ambitious and controversial projects to them. They are systematically rejected, on the grounds of not being right for the audience. These public channels are therefore no longer providing the public service they are meant to and simply entertain the audience.

Peter Kosminsky recalls that a mini-series like *Three Girls*, produced by the BBC, attracted a huge number of viewers in Great Britain (more than 8 million people). The subject - the story of three young girls that become the victims of sex trafficking – is extremely sensitive. The BBC's aim was certainly not to entertain, but to educate and inform. *Three Girls* in itself is a public service.

An audience member says he recently tried to pitch a drama to France Télévisions on the failures of public hospitals. The channel rejected the project, arguing that a public service channel could not criticise another public service. Peter Kosminsky reminds the audience that it is precisely up to the public services, payed for by public money, to criticise the system's flaws. He explains that he would have never had a career had the BBC not felt obligated to criticise the government. The BBC is one of the cornerstones of the power balance system, essential in maintaining the running of democracy.

But all is not doom and gloom in France. Certain broadcasters are far braver. An audience member mentions *L'Embrasement*, which aired on Arte. By returning to the tragedy that provoked the riots of the fall of 2005 (the death of two teenagers, electrocuted while then had taken refuge in an electric transformer to flee the police), this drama clearly exposed the lie and explored the widening gap between suburban youth and politics. Polemical and courageous works certainly have their place in the French programming slots. Unfortunately they are far too rare.



# MURRAY GOLD

## COMPOSER

### CHAINED BY

Olivier Desbrosses, journalist  
Nicolas Jorelle, composer

WITH THE SUPPORT OF 

Murray Gold was on the stage of the Fontainebleau theatre the night before, during Série Series' opening ceremony, to present *A Very English Scandal* alongside Stephen Frears and Dominic Treadwell Collins.

Nicolas Jorelle introduces Olivier Desbrosses, a journalist specialised in music, who has been following Murray for a while and whom he has met several times already.

### A good composer is a good reader

Murray Gold did not do any classical musical studies. He only had piano lessons as a child, starting when he was 5. The teacher was an old lady who charged 25 pence a lesson. So, across his entire life, his music education, which lasted for 8 years, cost his parents less than 100 pounds!

Murray points out what, to him, is the most precious resource for a composer: the script. Everything the composer needs to know is in the script: the structure, the drama, the characters. And 99% of the problems one can find in a finished show were already present in the script, and could therefore have been avoided before filming began.

"When I read a script, I hear music". Murray Gold explains that he always starts with a personal spotting session, during which he reads the script and marks the moment where he is hearing music. He does this preliminary work himself, without the director. It is not easy for a composer to become a good script reader, one needs to train, to learn



to pay attention to all the details (in particular to the stage directions, which are essential), but also to take the necessary time: "sometimes, it takes me 2 or 3 days to read just one hour, as I need to read slowly in order to visualise everything correctly".

### Russell T. Davies: a long-standing work relation

Russell T. Davies has been a very important person throughout Murray's career. Whereas in cinema, a composer tends to maintain long-term collaborations with directors, in TV, as screenwriters have a more prominent role, it is logical to develop strong creative ties with them.

Murray Gold started working with Russell T. Davies when the writer spotted his work on an adaptation of *Vanity Fair*. He had just stopped working with the composer of *Queer as Folk* (who actually won an Oscar that same year!) and was looking for someone to replace him. He called Murray saying "I've done this thing, it is my best work so far, and I'd like you to work on it". Since then, Murray has worked on all of Russell T. Davies' projects; and luckily, he has done many.

Murray tells an anecdote to illustrate their way of working. One day, when they were working on *Queer as Folk* at Murray's place, they went out to get something to eat and when they came back, the house was on fire. Even though it was partly burnt down, they managed to find a plug, plugged it on the TV, sat with a scarf on their face because of the fume, and carried on working on the keys. So, in a way, it's a collaboration built on fire!

Of course, Russell T. Davies' involvement in *A Very English Scandal* encouraged Murray to join the project, but he was also thrilled to work with Stephen Frears. "They could also get Alexandre Desplats for the music, but he was more expensive!"

### *A Very English Scandal: the art of irony*

Olivier Desbrosses and Nicolas Jorelle move on to *A Very English Scandal*, noting that the music is very orchestrated, very sophisticated, to fit the series' arena and dramatic theme; but the music also gets to highlight perfectly the irony, which is another essential, but less visible element of the series.

Murray Gold wrote the entire score for the 4 episodes before seeing any images – "this is how valuable the script is!" He confesses he thought it could be tough to work with Frears, as anyone with such a career must necessarily be tough. But it was actually very smooth. "He is impatient, he doesn't suffer fools, but as he is a great director, he knows exactly what he wants, which in the end makes things easy". When Stephen Frears heard the music, he immediately liked it and agreed that it was the right idea for the series. Murray Gold explains that he chose to send the themes to Stephen Frears and to the executive producers very early, which may sound bold. But they liked it from the beginning, and it was actually a form of protection: "as a composer, you are the last one in the chain, the last hope for everyone, and all the trouble might end up on your head".

The theme Murray Gold had in mind was very catchy and people found a comical tone in it. But it is actually in A flat minor, whereas we tend to systematically associate joy with majors. When he started working on this theme which was stuck in his head, he realised it had quite a kaleidoscopic potential.

It was natural enough for Murray to find the balance between drama and comedy: "it is just my character. For me, everything is funny". This is the second thing a composer has to do when reading a script: hearing the tone, and finding the joy.

### In the *Doctor Who* galaxy

Murray Gold worked on *Doctor Who* for 13 years. Even though the series and its universe are 50 or 60 years old, it was reborn in 2005, which allowed Murray to bring his personal touch. "It was the perfect show for me, the balance between humour, adventure and little moments of sadness were the perfect fit for me". Murray worked on approximatively 150 episodes. It was quite hard, as he sometimes had to compose 40 minutes of music in one week.

In a way, he was, alongside the showrunner Steven Moffat, one of the series' creative gatekeepers, ensuring the artistic coherence throughout the years, while the directors and even the cast were changing. He worked closely with Steven Moffat (sometimes, he would even send him some new music as an inspiration for the scripts that were not written yet), but never met the directors in person. It was a deliberate choice to prevent some directors, who thought they could suddenly change the whole musical identity which had been in place for years, from interfering. "You don't have time to argue when you get an episode on a Friday and by the next Wednesday you need to send a 35-minute score to the orchestrator".

Over the years, Murray had to re-write the original theme several times, which was quite tough, as the rhythm tended to sound like a Christmas song when he tried to do more modern, electronic versions of it. "What I did on the main theme is what I am the least proud of".



One of the challenges was to write new themes for each new Doctor Who, each new actor. "Character themes are a bit old fashioned, some producers hate them, but I love them and I think the audience too". Each actor was different and brought something new; seeing them walk, talk, Murray Gold imagined new, corresponding rhythms. "Doctor Who's characters were all easy to write music for, they are all very musical, it feels like they can start singing any time".

After giving 12 years of his life to *Doctor Who*, Murray decided that he would not do the next season. "It was not an easy decision. It is very touching to have young adults telling me they've been listening to my music since their childhood". Soon after this announcement, he got two propositions, and *A Very English Scandal* was one of them.

#### Methods and tools

About working with electronics, Murray Gold explains that in his head, everything is an acoustic melody, which for the most part can be expressed with chords and a melody line. In 2013, he got a new computer and decided that he would buy every new sample library that came out; he ended up with 12 Terabits of samples, but little by little he realised that he kept using the same 50 sounds. "But computers are so powerful, the laboratory of music today is so much fun, and it is magnificent to just sit and make music that did not exist 10 seconds before".

Murray gives a piece of advice to the composers in the room: "try and dream out your music before you sit in front of the computers, make the notes and the sounds in your head, otherwise you will be directed by the computer. If you think it before, you will have a more original, personal and recognisable sound". The most important thing for a composer is to find and express his own voice.

Olivier Desbrosses opens up the discussion to the use of temp (temporary) music. For Murray, every composer should hate it. "It is so dangerous". He thinks it is a much better idea for the composer to supply music for each cut before or during the editing, even if it requires more work.

A participant in the room encourages Murray Gold to talk about rights. When he started working 20 years ago, the commissioning fee was much higher and one kept one's rights. Progressively, commissioning fees got lower and lower. Nowadays, actors such as Netflix and Amazon don't want to pay any royalty; they give money, sometimes even good money, but the composer doesn't keep any rights. Murray says that he did not want his music to be on Spotify, but his publisher insisted that they were moving in the right direction and that he ought to be on it because they will eventually start paying. "All I can tell you is: hold on where you can".

Murray Gold concludes the session talking about his other activities besides film and TV: he loves working on musicals and has always kept doing it, even when he was busy with *Doctor Who*, but he does not write songs for other purposes than musicals anymore.



# WALTER IUZZOLINO

FOUNDER AND CURATOR  
OF WALTER PRESENTS



## FUCK THE FORMULA, START TAKING CREATIVE RISKS AGAIN!

Walter Iuzzolino launched Walter Presents in January 2016. Funded by Channel 4, the online VOD service is dedicated entirely to international drama. Via the online platform, he notably participated in broadcasting *Heartless*, *Deutschland 83*, *Spin* and *Valkyrien*, and has contributed to the promotion of European series all over the world, especially in Anglo-saxon countries.

Having spent the last four years watching thousands of hours of series, mainly European ones, Walter Iuzzolino was in the ideal position to observe the trends and evolution of creation in television. It is evident to him that after a few euphoric years, series production in Europe is facing new challenges and has reached a tipping point. This has shed light on the shortfalls and weaknesses of an audiovisual system based on an outdated model.

### The gold rush

Welcome to the third golden age of TV series. This new and intensely creative era was born in the United States. If Walter Iuzzolino had to put a start date on the revolution that flooded TV screens the world over, it would be 1999, the year the first season of *The Sopranos* was broadcast. Almost overnight, paying channel HBO upturned the traditional economic rationale that had dominated the audiovisual sector. Finally, there was proof that a non-mainstream series could be profitable and even find phenomenal commercial success. HBO had paved the way and other American channels were quick to follow. The start of the millennia was marked by the continual broadcast of ambitious, complex and audacious series like *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad*.

As Hollywood focused mainly on big blockbusters, the space generally

occupied by independent cinema progressively shifted to the small screen. The most recent example of that is *Big Little Lies*, broadcast on HBO: a series with a star studded cast (Nicole Kidman and Reese Witherspoon, to name just a couple). Just a few years ago, these actresses would never have accepted a role in a TV series. "Television is no longer the ugly duckling".

Europe, not about to stand idly by, quickly dove head first into the breach created by American television. According to Walter Iuzzolino, the first European series that seemed capable of competing with American productions was *Spiral*. Against all odds, it was met with considerable success in the UK, a country that had so far showed little to no interest in European series, French series even less so.

*Spiral* was the predecessor of Scandinavian series like *The Killing*, *Borgen* and *Broen*, and the rise of a movement known as the "Scandi Noir". For a good few years, for the English speaking public at least, European series were mainly Scandinavian, with a few French exceptions. Just as viewers' interest in the "Scandi Noir" world seemed to be waning, *Deutschland 83* brought a new creative lease of life to European series and piqued the public's curiosity and appetite for German, Belgian and even Czech series.

On a more British note, one can only commend the courage of a channel like Channel 4, that chose to broadcast *Deutschland 83* at 9pm, one of the most sought after time slots; what's more on the 3rd January 2016, the first Sunday of the year. Admittedly, the series is exceptional - Walter Iuzzolino clearly wouldn't say otherwise as he is largely responsible, via his platform, for its broadcast in the UK -, but it isn't what one would call 'mainstream'. It's strange, a mix of all genres, combining comedy and drama, with a unique protagonist (a rebellious spy).

The concept is absolutely irresistible. *Deutschland 83* proves that daring and high quality programs will always find their public. For producers, broadcasters and distributors, European series are "the new eldorado".

The market was asking for European series and the world answered. Everyone wanted a piece of the action, including the big new American platforms. Although this 'gold rush' was beneficial to creators, both in financial and creative terms, it led to the market being inundated by expensive, slick and often very boring European productions. Unfortunately, series are increasingly starting to resemble each other. "Under the pretext of market expectations, one always finds the same elements: a young girl disappears, a forest, a corpse, vintage cars, a depressed detective... European series have become the victims of their own success and have descended into mediocrity".

### An endangered system

Walter Iuzzolino thinks that "Europe is much better than that". It has its own, totally unique, audiovisual ecosystem, made-up of both public channels and commercial broadcasters. Channels compete in order to offer their country's viewers programmes that fit their expectations, but also their tastes. Walter Iuzzolino is convinced that the tone, style and narrative structure of a series are intrinsically linked to the cultural identity of the country in which it was produced. "*Spiral* and *The Returned* are exceptional series because they are extremely French". The same can be said of *Borgen* or even *Broen*, both profoundly lutheran series that would never have seen the light of day outside of Scandinavia. Walter Iuzzolino hates the word "global", let alone the word "glocal" which he abhors.

Unfortunately, heads of drama of today's TV channels are too scared to fail and limit themselves to tirelessly repeating the same recipe.

However, Walter Iuzzolino doesn't want to attack them and give them all the blame. In another life, he was a programme consultant for a big channel and is more than aware of the pressure they are often under. Nevertheless, he notes that content managers often have very preconceived ideas on viewer's expectations. They only think about the masses. Walter Iuzzolino recalls having presented *Deutschland 83* to several content managers of various English channels. No one believed in it, their main argument against it being that "the German language is too ugly". Goethe must have rolled over in his grave!

Traditional broadcasters, whether they be commercial or public, continue to measure the success of their programs based on an obsolete model: that of linear audience numbers. For the new big platforms - Netflix or Amazon, for example -, the viewing numbers of any one series don't matter (in fact, they never share the audience numbers of their programs), the only thing that is counted is the number of subscribers. In order to attract the largest number of subscribers, they rely on originality, whether it be in the programs they produce themselves or in the ones they buy from across the world. Today, Netflix buys a lot of programs that struggle to find an audience locally and are directed at a niche public. These platforms shouldn't be held responsible for the drop in quality of European series; they simply buy what is available on the market.

Walter Iuzzolino understands the difficulties broadcasters are faced with nowadays. "Prime-time still brings in a lot of money and it's very difficult to monetise VOD services", he points out. Nevertheless, he suggests new criteria to evaluate the quality of a series: its reputation, its capacity to influence or even change viewers' tastes, viewing numbers over the entire broadcast (linear and non-linear) and the repercussions on the audiovisual landscape in its entirety.



Broadcasters can no longer settle for calculation the viewing rates of their programs on a specific night of the week. The battle is already lost anyway because the audiovisual system as we know it today will be completely destroyed in the coming years. Netflix and Amazon have revolutionised the way content is consumed. Their subscribers can watch the series they want, when and where they want to. The public's habits have evolved and TV channels will have increasing difficulty retaining viewers with only one episode per week.

Channel 4 has clearly understood the problem. When it chose to finance Walter Presents, the channel came up with a strategy that was as simple as it was effective. Walter Luzzolino buys about 30 series per year. Channel 4 gives him complete freedom and doesn't intervene in his editorial decisions. Every month a series, selected following his advice, is launched on the channel. The first episode is broadcast on Sunday at 10pm and viewers can then watch the following episodes for free on Walter Presents, located on All 4, the channel's TV catch-up website. So Channel 4 is using linear broadcasting in order to promote non-linear broadcasting. This strategy paid off and allowed the channel to democratise the use of All 4 and to attract a new more invested and loyal public.

#### Power to creativity

Walter Luzzolino still believes in television. However, big channels need to change their stance and understand that the opportunities offered



by digital have blown up the linear flow of broadcasting. "They need to get used to the idea that they're not going to get 5 million viewers for a Wednesday night prime-time; that battle is already lost". In other words, European channels have to urgently change their programming policies and invent new strategies, the objective of which will no longer be mass audiences but originality and creativity. Indeed, if they keep churning out the same recipes, creativity is at risk of being monopolised by the big international conglomerates.



**BETH JOHNSON & DAVID FORREST**

Dr. Beth Johnson is an associate professor of film and media at the University of Leeds. Her research focusses on representation of genre, gender and social class on screen.

Dr. David Forrest is a senior lecturer in film at the University of Sheffield. His main topic of research is British realist and social cinema, with a particular interest in the use of space, location and landscape in realism. David Forrest has published pieces on British TV drama, the British New Wave and contemporary British Cinema.

Beth Johnson and David Forrest co-wrote *Social Class and TV Drama in Contemporary Britain*, which is a compilation of 17 chapters exploring contemporary British series and their representation of social class. The book demonstrates how ingrained the notion of class is in British drama, whilst bridging the gap between multiple genres, from the first serials filmed in studios to soaps, period series and animation. The different chapters take on topics like the vision of Stephen Poliakoff, Jimmy McGovern and Shane Meadows, the performances of actors Maxine Peake and Jimmy Nail, and even the specificity of sitcoms and animated series. This book also has studies of more recent series, like *Peaky Blinders* and *This Is England*, as well as popular British series like *Goodnight Sweetheart* and *Footballers' Wives*. The book therefore aims to analyse the new point of view offered by current British TV series, that constantly fuel the debate on contemporary identity and social class.

In order to illustrate their point, Beth Johnson and David Forrest will explore social class and its identity through two series: *Happy Valley* and *This Is England*.

#### *Happy Valley* : a distinctly "unhappy" valley

The first season of *Happy Valley* (6 episodes), broadcast on BBC One in 2014, was written by Sally Wainwright, a British TV writer, producer and director from Yorkshire. Written as a crime drama, the series develops around central character Catherine Cawood (played by Sarah Lancashire), a police sergeant in a rural town in West Yorkshire. Professionally, she is experienced, determined, brave and duty conscious, loves her work and thrives off catching criminals. Her personal life on the other hand is much more chaotic.

In the opening scene, the audience find Catherine in the heat of the action, trying to convince a young drug addict not to burn himself alive. This is what she tells him: "I'm Catherine by the way, I'm 47, I'm divorced, I live with my sister who is a recovering heroin addict, I've two grown-up children, one dead, one who doesn't speak to me and a grandson". This incredible scene means they have not only introduced the character, but they've underlined her social status and life experience.

As a leading lady, Catherine is very different from other policewomen who have so far dominated British drama, whether it be Jane Tennison (*Prime Suspect*), Stella Gibson (*The Fall*) or Janet Scott (*Scott & Bailey*), to name just a few. Catherine is unique, especially physically. Indeed, traditional policewomen are usually refined and distant, whereas Catherine is far from having the attitude of a supermodel, especially in her police uniform. She is mostly shown as a working woman in the middle of a community she knows very well and loves, despite its darker side. She knows the lively areas, the alleys and backstreets.

## SOCIAL CLASS AND TELEVISION DRAMA IN CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN

As a community officer, Catherine is only happy when working on the streets, away from the station. She is proud to take on the tasks that her DI colleagues consider to be beneath them.

Sally Wainwright chose to set the series in the North of England, an area she knows all too well, as she lives there. She reveals the bare beauty and brutality of it. Although at first this rural and verdant part of England seems peaceful and welcoming, it is home to incredible violence. In that respect, the series is very realistic. The notion of class identity is built into the narrative, as the main protagonists fight to strive in a county consumed by social misery, addiction and unemployment. Indeed, there is very little happy about this valley, contrarily to what the title leads us to believe. The social environment is far from uniform and the main characters are from different social backgrounds.

As well as the purely social dimension, *Happy Valley* provokes thoughts on the social identity of women. Sally Wainwright's series is particularly violent and the violence we see is more often than not inflicted on women. They are deprived of choices, prisoners of their own environment, but all with social, financial and emotional responsibilities. However, it is important to note that the women depicted aren't just powerless victims. They often show great resilience, but they are constantly oppressed with violence. The series shows us the beaten, the wounded. Nevertheless, they never give up, courageously taking their destiny in their own hands.

For Beth Johnson, the most interesting thing about Catherine Cawood isn't so much her social status as her humanity, the empathy she shows victims, regardless of their social background. In the second season, we see prostitutes being brutally attacked. Catherine doesn't hesitate to find other prostitutes and warn them about what has happened and to stay safe. She has a compulsive need to protect and understand weaker people, whereas her colleagues tend to see them as lost causes. To her, these women are victims first and foremost. She refuses to judge them, instead trying to understand the circumstances that led to them turning to prostitution. Catherine appears to us as a sounding board of all the misery of *Happy Valley*, shedding light on social inequality and using empathy as a powerful tool to break down social barriers. With

that in mind, the series is a lot more optimistic than it seems.

#### **This Is England : British identity**

Shane Meadows' series, broadcast in 2010 and 2015 on Channel 4, is probably one of the most ambitious and popular British TV series of the last decade. The series' origin was on the silver screen. Shane Meadows directed the feature film *This Is England* in 2006. The largely autobiographical film follows Shaun, a 13 year old who has lost his father and joins a gang of skinheads. When he finished the film, the writer felt something was unfinished and therefore decided to continue the teenager (played by Thomas Turgoose)'s story. *This Is England '86*, a four part mini-series, is set three years after the events depicted in the film. Two more seasons followed: *This Is England '88* and *This Is England '90*.

Going from a big to a small screen enabled Shane Meadows to delve deeper into the story by developing other characters (the film having been mainly based on Shaun). So, although the main theme of the film was racism, the series includes many different themes and paints a social portrait of Great Britain. In order to successfully move into the world of series, David Forrest explains that Shane Meadows surrounded himself with all sorts of experts, which meant he could broaden the social scope of *This Is England*. So, for the screenplay, he called on Jack Thorne, who was known for *Skins* and *Shameless*. The director of the first two episodes of *This Is England '86* was Tom Harper, who had also worked on *Misfits*. These three series - *Skins*, *Shameless* and *Misfits* - were big influences on *This Is England*, by bringing elements like comedy and fantasy, both absent from the feature, to the table. In regards to Shane Meadows' series, David Forrest mentions a form of "fake social realism", far removed from the traditional depiction of social classes in British cinema.

Although location (North of England) is a key component in the *Happy Valley* plot, the locations in *This Is England* are never named. The series - just like the film - invents an imaginary, yet familiar, place. As a matter of fact, the feature was shot in Nottingham and the series in Sheffield. By deleting the historical and cultural specificity of certain locations, they become symbolic entities.



Despite the locations being unidentified, certain viewers may recognise some of the buildings used as sets. Overall, *This Is England* is a mix of social and cultural locations, all linked together in a sort of palimpsest, which gives the illusion of a unique and coherent setting. In refusing to set the story in a specific place, Shane Meadows was aiming to make his series universal. Indeed, viewers don't need to recognise Sheffield in order to immerse themselves in the series. "The series is called *This Is England*, not *This Is Sheffield*".

Then again, geographic location would allow the viewer to assimilate the plot of *This Is England* and interpret it with their own point of view. Indeed, in an article published in *The Guardian*, critic Paul Mason confirms that *This Is England '90* was a "powerful evocation of the corrosive heritage of Thatcherism". For him, the series captured the moment where British society fully descended into neoliberalism, erasing the idea of the collective and destroying any sense of community. The series touches on that time "where a person could go into the Job Centre with their head held high and a family could live off of a waitress' wages". Yet, looking at it a bit closer, we don't even see a Job Centre in the series. Characters' professional status is never brought up. For Paul Mason, *This Is England* comments on class identity. But the critic, who himself lived in Sheffield in the 90's, uses his own experience to analyse the series, whereas, as mentioned earlier, Sheffield is never mentioned. Paul Mason, a strong critic of Neoliberalism, saw what he wanted to see in the series, when actually, *This Is England* is a politically ambiguous piece.

To conclude, Beth Johnson underlines the differences with which both series examined approach the question of social class: openly in *Happy Valley* and more secretly in *This Is England*. The representation of social class is still one of the main concerns of British drama, and class inequality is often used to criticise the failings of British society. In Britain, television is a political instrument. The debate on social class, now more complex than it was in the past, includes new themes, like the place of women in society, for example. However, one cannot help but notice that ethnic minorities are all too often pushed out of the debate.



# TRANSNATIONAL EUROPEAN TELEVISION DRAMA: REALITY, CHALLENGES AND VISION



**IB BONDEBJERG**

## Introduction

For his talk, Ib Bondebjerg, professor emeritus at the University of Copenhagen, draws from the publication *Transnational European Television Drama*, of which he led the writing, to study the new challenges faced by European drama, notably through the development of a transnational European television culture. This collection of academic texts aims to study the main forces that drive European co-productions today, their successes as well as their failures, and the influence these new transnational European creative networks may have. He also questions the idea of "unity in diversity" and how this concept is reflected in European film and television culture. Alongside this, the book examines the national and European policies put in place to meet the new challenges of the digital world. Several chapters are devoted to European transnational co-productions and the audience's reaction to drama from other European countries, the goal being, in particular, to measure the role that drama and series play in building this cultural European space. Finally, the book studies the universal, national and European dimensions of different genres, be it a thriller, drama or a period drama.

## European cultural integration

Through studying the question of cultural integration in Europe, Ib Bondebjerg distinguishes three theoretical approaches. The first is what he calls "cultural essentialism". The proponents of this theory assume that Europe is the fruit of a common cultural history and that it must today be reinvented, or even modernized, to build a more integrated Europe. Thus, Jérôme Clément (first head of ARTE) said

that "to change the mentalities, the state of mind, and create the conditions for a true united Europe, it is not enough to have a currency, an army corps, and directives, as good as they may be. Nor a treaty. It takes a common vision. (...) So that the Germans, the French, the Italians, the Spaniards and all the others, including the British, learn to see and think about the world together". Although the statement is commendable, Ib Bondebjerg fears that it is somewhat misleading and naive. It is, in any case, very far from reality.

The second approach is more a form of functional pragmatism and relies on the concept of unity in diversity to deploy an institutional framework to strengthen, on a transnational level, the culture and audio-visual industries. This approach saw the birth, in the 80s, of the great cultural funds of the European Union - like Eurimages - which have, today, funded a majority of European co-productions.

Finally, the third approach - the most important according to Ib Bondebjerg - is aimed at developing cultural events on a European level. It is based on the creation of new transnational networks for European professionals (producers, buyers, distributors, authors, directors) whose mission is to offer the European audience programs (drama and series) from different countries of the Union. Transnational co-productions and funds are in full swing across the entire European audio-visual landscape. However, some fear that the development of such transnational networks will lead to the disappearance of national cultural identities. Ib Bondebjerg, based on a study conducted in 2011, emphasises that the deployment of unified networks at European level does not call into question the diversity of creation in the different countries that make it up.

## Some data

A study conducted in 2013 from a sample of television channels in 11 European countries shows that, at that moment, on average, only 21% of the series broadcast were European.

46% of the series available to viewers were American. European series were in majority broadcasted on public channels. Today, however, statistics show - in all countries, including the United Kingdom - that American series are increasingly having to compete with European series (regardless of their country of origin). For example, in Denmark, 51% of the series supplied were American in 2005, and only 18% in 2014 (all channels included). And across Europe, the audience is seeking for more and more local content.

## A lot of diversity, little unity

Exportation is still a major challenge. The success of American or British series has contributed to a global recognition of those countries. Everyone agrees that European series are an essential vector for the creation of a European vision and culture. Through the series, the small screen becomes a meeting place with the «other» Europeans. Thus, the proliferation of transnational series forces the viewer to confront other cultures. «They can see how Europeans live and think, and re-evaluate their relationship with Europe.»

After a recent study in Denmark, where two focus groups were interviewed on the series *The Team*, Ib Bondebjerg proved that the public appetite for transnational series is indisputable. That being said, this appetite concerns a certain kind of fiction, almost exclusively thrillers.



**Conclusion**

In conclusion, Ib Bondebjerg wants to be optimistic, highlighting the potential, particularly for export, of new transnational series supported by a dense network of institutions, funds (private and public) and professionals. Of course, these series meet the expectations of a growing segment of the European public. However, the European audio-visual landscape remains too fragmented, preventing it from responding to new challenges, particularly that of the digital world.

Ib Bondebjerg finally addresses the challenges of digital. As digital technologies are in principle borderless, it seems logical that they naturally reinforce transnational networks. However, he says, being implanted in an already fragmented media landscape, they only accentuate this fragmentation, since the multiplication of platforms still divides the audience on a national level. In most European countries, 10 to 15 streaming services compete for the same audience. No platform involving competing channels has yet emerged, we can only mention the UK platform project common to ITV, the BBC and Channel 4. Should we rely on the political levers of the European Union to develop more synergies? In a way, at the moment, it is actors like Netflix, HBO or Amazon Prime that fulfil the function of transnational European platforms, while taking a keen interest in co-production in national markets. It remains to be seen whether these are a threat, or a new opportunity...



# THE BBC, A EUROPEAN EXAMPLE?

**SPEAKERS**

**Hilary Salmon**, head of drama, BBC Studios

**Anne Edyean**, head of the BBC Writersroom

**Ben Caudell**, executive producer, BBC Studios

**Peter Kosminsky**, screenwriter, director

**CHAIRED BY**

**Marie-Elisabeth Deroche-Miles**, consultant

Marie-Elisabeth Deroche-Miles starts by acknowledging the “mother of all public television channels” that is the BBC. Its power of influence is incontestable and its programmes are watched, and often envied, all over the world. The BBC has always favoured drama, and the first series created by the channel was broadcast on the 14th July 1930. Today, British audiences are witnessing a genuine revolution with the creation of BBC Studios.

**BBC Studios: the BBC's new weapon**

In 2017, the BBC started a new and ambitious project. In the recent past, the channel produced the majority of its programmes in-house and purchased only a select few. The group then decided to align its company with its private competitors, so the decision was made to transfer in-house productions to a commercial entity (still 100% a BBC affiliate), named “BBC Studios”. This new subsidiary, set up a year ago, can now sell programs to new clients outside the group. So, the BBC made its internal production company a commercial company now capable of rivalling its direct competitors, both domestically and internationally.

Hilary Salmon explains that this strategy was put in place in order to compete with the exponential growth of independent production companies in Britain. “Only 10 years ago, the BBC only worked with fewer than 10 independent production companies. Now, there are more than 150”. The creation of BBC Studios was seen as a veritable earthquake. Its advantage is that it enables the channel to purchase new projects as well as selling projects to commercial (ITV, Netflix, Amazon) and public channels. In the past, certain series, developed

in-house over many months, were eventually turned down by the channel and simply buried, which caused a bit of tension with creators. Today, BBC Studios is capable of equalising the bids made by commercial channels, so it's easier to retain talent. Then again, certain series that were produced in-house until now and whose contract is coming to an end, are available for competitors. So, if a commercial studio offers a better idea, or a better price, they can end up taking over the production of subsequent seasons. The in-house BBC teams involved in series that are available to the competition sometimes end up struggling to cope. It's very difficult for them to lose a series they've been working on for years.

Regardless of the organisational changes within the group, the BBC's strategy in terms of drama remains unchanged. The principles that guide them can be summarised in four words: creativity, originality, quality and diversity. According to Hilary Salmon, the last is the most important. It is also the hardest to achieve. The BBC is a public channel, financed by licensing fees, and therefore must create programs aimed at all audiences. This challenge has never been harder to overcome. The group's channels have the double ambition of creating both “mainstream” and “niche” programs. The BBC has lost touch with its younger audience. More efforts need to be made to cater for BAME and disabled audiences in terms of drama.

**Three Girls: a series of public interest**

Marie-Elisabeth Deroche-Miles reminds the audience that the BBC is renowned for its politically engaged drama. No topic seems to scare them.

Unafraid of controversy, British television has always denounced the shortcomings of the British social and political system. This was already the case twenty years ago with *Care* (produced by Ruth Caleb, a guest of the 2017 edition of *Série Series*), a difficult and uncompromising TV film about a troubled boy who endures physical abuse by the staffers at a children's home. It's still the case today with *Three Girls*, an exceptional three part miniseries.

Hilary Salmon revisits the origin of this series, which draws its inspiration from a series of particularly grim incidents that caused a scandal in the UK: the sexual trafficking of around 40 teenage girls, most of them underage, organised by men of Pakistani origin in Rochdale, an old mining town. Hilary Salmon agrees that the series is very hard to watch, especially seeing as all the events retold are true. The series, as is often the case at the BBC, was rigorously researched. Susan Hogg, producer of *Three Girls*, investigated the events for quite a long time, relying on a contact within the police, who she got to know whilst developing a previous project, and on the testimonies of all three victims. The screenplay was written by Nicole Taylor, who chose to tell the story from the three girls' point of view. Of course, their names were changed to protect their anonymity.

Marie-Elisabeth Deroche-Miles points out that these events also led to a documentary, *Betrayed Girls*, broadcast on BBC 4. Hilary Salmon thinks that both genres - drama and documentary - are complimentary. However, drama writing has several advantages. Firstly, it was impossible to show the faces of the girls and their families, let alone reveal their identities. Secondly, drama allows them to tell the story from the emotional point of view of the different protagonists and, thus, make it easier for the audience to empathise with the ordeal these girls went through.

The BBC backed the project from start to end, convinced that this story needed telling, despite the courage it required. Hilary Salmon confesses that the viewing figures of *Three Girls* (over 8 million viewers watched the BBC broadcast) surprised them, proving that "success is always a surprise".

#### The voice of the BBC

The BBC has always attracted the greatest creative talent. It has launched the careers of some of the most sought-after British

screenwriters. It has always, and maybe even more so now, tried to bring new talent to light. That was the role assigned to the BBC Writersroom, which has been run by Anne Edyvean for three years. This small internal structure, attached to the Commissioning Department, was set up 13 years ago. Its mission is to discover, train and support new and experienced writers all over Britain. Branches have therefore been created in London, Manchester, Glasgow, Cardiff and Belfast.

The BBC Writersroom is very sought after and gets about 10,000 scripts per year. To get a first cut of candidates, it relies on a committee of about 25 readers. Anne Edyvean points out that this team is made up only of unpaid professionals. In light of the amount of scripts they receive, the selection process is particularly rigorous and readers only rarely read past the tenth page of a script. "If they don't find anything exciting in the first 10 pages, they don't read the rest". This first step means they can considerably cut down the number of candidates, which allows them to read the scripts they've kept in more detail.

Anne Edyvean notes that the BBC Writersroom doesn't look for projects; they are looking for talent. "We're looking for voices", she specifies, singular and unique writers who have that "holy fire". The BBC Writersroom receives a lot of detective scripts, some really good ones in fact. But the BBC already works with the best detective writers, so the screenplays they select are the ones that have a unique take on life.

The candidates who are eventually selected are allocated to either the drama or comedy room. They are then put through a 6 month development process, where they will get the opportunity to meet representatives of all the different parts of the BBC, even radio. On that note, Anne Edyvean points out that BBC Radio is the biggest commissioner of drama scripts. BBC Writersroom also introduces them to literary agents and various independent production companies. Everything is put in place to try and help these writers progress in their careers. Anne Edyvean reminds us that the main objective is discovering new talent. However, with the market being very competitive, the BBC refuses to hold them back, so once they pass through the Writersroom, they are encouraged to spread their wings. The BBC is a public service, so it must serve the entirety of the British audiovisual industry, Anne Edyvean points out. Nevertheless, the BBC hopes that in forging good relationships with these budding writers, they might present their projects to the BBC first.



Traditionally, the term *writers' room*, especially in the USA, means an actual room where a few writers are all writing together. These writers' rooms are often run by a showrunner. Marie-Elisabeth Deroche-Miles notes that those are still very rare in the UK. What is more, it seems British writers don't really want to write with a voice that isn't theirs.

Hilary Salmon explains that the American model is very different to the British one, which is more attached to the idea of a writer. She does, however, agree that some of the biggest American series have been led by brilliant showrunners. That's the case, for example, with Bruce Miller on *The Handmaid's Tale* or Vince Gilligan on *Breaking Bad*. The lack of Writers' rooms in the UK might explain the current difficulties found in producing series with multiple seasons.

Anne Edyvean points out that Heidi Thomas, the creator of *Call the Midwife*, is a showrunner. However, unlike American *writers' rooms*, the writers involved in the series were given an entire episode to write. The writing work in the US is a lot more fragmented. Writers are hired to write just parts of the dialogue. It is quite rare they are given a whole episode.

Peter Kosminsky is not a fan of the showrunner model. He is convinced that a drama must rest on the vision of one writer and doesn't believe in collective writing. Nevertheless, he admits that it works for certain projects. He is currently working on a ten-part series for Channel 4. He is fully aware that he won't be able to write and direct all ten episodes. This project rests more on a concept than an actual storyline, so the plan is to develop it over several seasons. In this case, the set-up of an American-style Writers' room makes total sense. A mini-series like *Three Girls*, on the other hand, can be written by one person. All in all, Peter Kosminsky thinks that "the showrunner system is no panacea".

#### Comedy, a British art form

Of course, we couldn't talk about the BBC without bringing up one of its specialities: comedy. The group produces around 110 hours of comedy per year, to all types of audiences. Certain sitcoms are aimed at a very niche audience, so they are only broadcast online. Other dramas are broadcast

specifically during the Christmas period and are aimed at the whole family.

Ben Caudell reminds us that comedy is probably the hardest thing in the world. It's also the one that divides opinion the most. Today, the most polar British sitcom is *Mrs Brown's Boys*. As half the country is crying with laughter, the other half hates - and that's understating - the series. Drama series get significantly less extreme reactions. When someone doesn't like a suspenseful series, they simply don't watch it. A comedy and its creators, however, can attract a hoard of angry viewers. Some people even watch *Mrs Brown's Boys* in the hope that they'll hate it. Ben Caudell is very pragmatic about his job. "If a comedy makes just one person laugh, I feel like I've done my job". Laughter, he points out, is of public interest.

#### The BBC, voice of freedom. Myth or reality?

The comedies produced by the BBC are often very subversive (no topic is off limits), which leads a lot of people to think the channel gives writers full creative license. Marie-Elisabeth Deroche-Miles asks Peter Kosminsky directly about his experience at the BBC. Are the writers who work for the BBC as free as we think?

Peter Kosminsky reminds her that the BBC isn't a monolith, it's a company made up of people, all of them different. The freedom a writer is given depends on the people he is working with. So, while some commissioning editor give the writer complete freedom, others are much more involved and tend to micro-manage the creative process. In any case, Peter Kosminsky is convinced that nowadays it is a lot easier to work with the BBC, as is proven by a series like *Three Girls*. In the past, the group was always afraid of law suits, so writers' creativity wasn't impeded by program directors so much as it was by lawyers and other legal advisors. He recalls the difficulties he had when working on *Warriors*, when the BBC was constantly putting a spanner in the works. That's why he went to work for Channel 4. Today, when Peter Kosminsky has a drama project, before talking to the channel, he finds out about the commissioning editor.



#### **Are authors increasingly precarious?**

The British writers' and directors' guilds recently published articles warning the audiovisual community about the job insecurity of writers. It seems writers are increasingly asked to work for free. Anne Edyean confirms this, while specifying that the BBC makes a point of always paying writers. Independent production companies, however, are far less honourable. Desperate to get contracts and lacking budget, they tend to ask writers to work for free. Anne Edyean points out that *pitches* - except exclusive commissions - aren't paid at the BBC.

For Peter Kosminsky, the market has become much more competitive and channels expect production companies to present almost finished products. A simple pitch isn't enough anymore. So, writers work for free, sometimes for months, on a project before a production company deems it ready to present to a channel.

#### **Diversity, the BBC's new challenge**

Marie-Elisabeth Deroche-Miles seizes this opportunity to bring up diversity and, notably, the role of women in British television. The last figures published by the Director's Guild of Great-Britain are quite shocking. Female screenwriters are still a huge minority. Hilary Salmon doesn't question the figures, but reminds us that they date back to 2016. The criticism the BBC faced was fully justified. She does, however, feel that the situation has improved. Diversity and male-female equality are part of the new head of drama Piers Wenger's prime interests. Today, around 45% of writers at the BBC are women. Disparities are still very strong in comedy, which is still very male dominated. Ben Caudell thinks that the mentality is changing, whether it be towards women, ethnic minorities or even the LGBTQ community.



#### **The BBC and Netflix divorce**

Marie-Elisabeth Deroche-Miles then turns the discussion towards the relationship between the BBC and the new American streaming platforms (Netflix, Amazon). Hilary Salmon recalls that for a few years the BBC had a "wonderful love story" with these platforms, with the birth of many beautiful co-productions (*Troy: Fall of a City*, for example). Unfortunately, "the honeymoon is over". Netflix has completely changed its strategy and recently announced its plan to focus its billions of dollars almost exclusively on original content. Ties between the platform and the BBC seem almost completely cut. Netflix even announced its project of opening a production studio in London, Marie-Elisabeth Deroche-Miles points out. Hilary Salmon thinks that Netflix isn't entirely responsible for the divorce. The BBC is a very demanding partner, probably too demanding. Unfortunately, the decision by SVOD platforms to withdraw from the co-production market is jeopardising the British audiovisual landscape.

At the risk of sounding alarmist, Peter Kosminsky underlines the gravity of the situation, denouncing «the gradual uberisation of the British audiovisual industry». He points out that the cost of dramatic series has exploded in recent years, from £1 million to £2 million for one hour of programming. At the same time, the budget of channels such as the BBC or Channel 4 has not increased and rarely exceeds £1 million. To finance this gap, the channels called on the new SVOD players. Today, Netflix wants to withdraw from the co-production market to fly on its own. This new strategy may open up new opportunities for authors who will now be able to sell their projects directly to SVOD platforms. Peter Kosminsky notes that Netflix is above all a global company and finances projects designed for the international market as a priority. A series like *Three Girls*, however successful and important it may be, will never be funded by Netflix.

Moreover, the American giant's new strategy is to poach the biggest talent (directors, screenwriters, actors) with exclusive, and sometimes outrageous, contracts. Indeed, Netflix recently signed contracts with Ryan Murphy (*American Horror Story*, *Nip/Tuck*) and Shonda Rhimes (*Grey's Anatomy*, *Scandal*). The platforms attract writers from all walks of life, because they have a reputation for allowing great artistic freedom. Peter Kosminsky fears that this is a myth. He recently heard several stories about the awful working conditions at Amazon and the lack of respect the managers showed towards creators.

Peter Kosminsky admits he's very pessimistic. France, unlike the UK, has a formidable weapon: the French language. The British audiovisual sector is much less armed against Netflix's cultural imperialism and risks "becoming America's 51st state".

The fight between the traditional British channels and the large platforms is completely unequal, as the latter are not subject to any regulations on British soil. The European Union, relying on the principle of cultural exception, is taking measures to force platforms to finance the European audiovisual sector, at least partly. But for Peter Kosminsky, "the English government is passive, too busy managing the dramatic consequences of Brexit".



# PUBLIC TELEVISION SERVICES IN EUROPE, A BEACON IN THE HEART OF A STORM?



## SPEAKERS

**Liselott Forsman**, Executive producer international projects for Yle and Head of the EBU drama group  
**Jeroen Depraetere**, Head of Television and Future Media, EBU  
**Wim Janssen**, Content Manager, VRT  
**Françoise Mayor**, Head of drama, RTS  
**Christian Rank**, Head of drama, DR  
**Ville Vilén**, Content Director, Yle

## CHAIRED BY

**Synnøve Hørsdal**, producer, Maipo

IN ASSOCIATION WITH **EBU**

## Introduction to public service broadcasting in Europe with the EBU

Speaking on behalf of the European Broadcasting Union, Liselott Forsman and Jeroen Depraetere open the debate with key facts about public service broadcasting in Europe. For 3 years now the EBU has been a partner of Série Series, and each year organises the annual meeting of its drama group during Série Series. This meeting day allows European Heads of Drama to discuss business and content with their peers, in a confidential atmosphere. Liselott points out that one of the main challenges for public service broadcasters is to find the right way to work in an ethical manner, which is mostly what these discussions are about. For her, "public service media is about saving the world!" This year, as the past few months have been particularly challenging for public service broadcasters, Série Series has decided to open up the discussion with a public debate, in which representatives of several European channels will take part.

Liselott and Jeroen introduce a few figures. The EBU unites 73 members in 52 countries, who operate 506 channels for a potential audience of 1.4 billion people across the world. Its members invest 18 billion euros a year in creation, which is more than twice the investment of Netflix and Amazon put together.

After this introduction, they give the floor to Synnøve Hørsdal, who chairs the debate, and to the broadcasters involved in the discussion: Wim Janssen (VRT, Belgium), Françoise Mayor (RTS, Switzerland), Ville Vilén (Yle, Finland) and Christian Rank (DR, Denmark).

## What is at the very heart of public service television?

Synnøve Hørsdal kicks off the discussion by asking each participant what

essentially defines public service broadcasting in their point of view.

For Christian Rank, "it is about who we are and why we are". Public service television should allow people to explore sides of their world that they don't know, and at the same time, to raise very local discussions.

For Ville Vilén, when it comes to drama, there is a difference between public and commercial television, but at the same time there isn't: they must all offer quality content giving strong emotions, no matter where the money comes from. But public service broadcasters have something more: they can and must, experiment. They have to provide a variety of content in order for each individual to find what they need. For Françoise Mayor, the distinction is simple: public service television has a mission, whereas commercial television hasn't. Public service broadcasters have a mission to talk about and to everyone, to be generous, and to be ethical.

Wim Janssen agrees. For him, public service broadcasters should help people understand who we are in this world. They should be raising ethical questions within the community, without defining what the answer is, but looking at how it resonates in the group.

## Let's talk about financement

Until now, DR has been license financed, but it recently faced a 20% budget cut, and is now moving to a tax funding. The cut was a political decision: every 4 years, the government signs a new agreement with DR, thus making new decisions. According to Christian Rank, the government thinks DR is too big and should focus more specifically

on core public service missions. Synnøve Hørsdal asks if this will impact the number of drama programmes, or if DR will turn more to co-production to compensate? Christian Rank answers that for DR, in-house production has been a keystone as it is what has allowed them to produce daring series. But of course, if the programmes cannot be financed anymore, they could be forced to open up to more co-productions.

Ville Vilén notes that Finland was at the avant-garde as they switched from the license to a fixed media tax a few years ago. For him, this is very logical as today we don't only watch tv on television screens, and at Yle they are quite happy with this decision. It is an individual tax, paid by 80% of the population, based on income.

VRT is financed at 60% by the State, and at 40% with money coming from elsewhere, following very strict rules.

Switzerland, as Françoise Mayor explains, is at a crossroad. Until two years ago, the public channels got 2/3 of their funding from the license fee, and 1/3 from commercial income. Now they have a media tax, but it has been deeply questioned with the "No billag" referendum this winter, which could have led to a complete suppression of public funding for these broadcasters.

Most public service broadcasters are very dependent on whether the public wants to keep them or not, and in the countries with a license, it is a particularly recurrent question with political issues.

## "No Billag"

Françoise Mayor comes back to the "No Billag" initiative which shook public service television a few months ago.

In Switzerland, if you can get enough people to sign a petition, you are then automatically allowed to organise a general vote in the country. In 2016, the old-fashioned populist party UDC paired with young people to organise the "No Billag" referendum, Billag being the name of the structure collecting the media tax. The question simply relied on these two words, "No Billag?", which meant no government money at all and the end of public service media in the country. In a multicultural country like Switzerland, public service media have a particular position as they are sometimes the only ones providing minorities with

information and content.

The "No Billag" initiative created huge debate in the country, not only on television but more generally on public service. In December, the figures were very dark. But a collective movement – often led by cultural players and artists – speaking in favour of public service broadcasting did a fantastic campaign. The vote was in March and 71% of the population voted in favour of public service television; surprisingly, the rate was even higher for young people, who were 75% for.

It is hard to say why people defended public service television in the end. As a public service media, they had to remain neutral and could not campaign for themselves, so they had to let other people do it. But as individuals, Françoise Mayor says, they could go out, talk to people, listen to the critics, which most of the time consisted of "I want to pay only for what I consume". In the end, she is convinced that it helped the broadcasters re-create contact with society. And now, the people who fought for them want their due! They ask, for instance, for more Swiss actors in co-productions. What is important now is to keep on listening to expectations in order to remain relevant.

## What about children's programming?

Synnøve Hørsdal moves on to France, mentioning the recently-announced closing of France 4, the public channel for children. She asks participants if they think children's programming is at the core of the public broadcasters' missions.

Ville Vilén answers that children's programmes are very important for Yle and that they will keep investing more and more in those, despite the difficulties, notably to make sure that non-violent content is available for children. Today, drama for children between 10 and 15 is particularly important for Yle.

Christian Rank agrees: as a public broadcaster, we have to create a safe environment that parents can trust.

For Synnøve, the closing of France 4 shines light on a major challenge facing public broadcasters: as soon as you lose your audience, we might close you down.



For Françoise Mayor, Swiss and France are doing a similar move, and she is convinced that none of them lost the younger audience, it is more a subjective vision of critical mass. They can come back to TV later, but such a strategy will probably prevent them from doing so.

Ville and Liselott remind us that Finland has never had any specific children's channels and that 70% of the viewing comes from online. According to them, what matters the most is not the screening platform, but the content; this applies for children's programming: you have to keep producing these programmes, no matter how they will be watched.

#### Working within an ecosystem

Moving on to drama, Christian Rank explains that one of the reasons they don't want to close down the in-house production at DR is that it plays a major part in the training of talent and the reinforcement of the Danish ecosystem. It is also the only place, he feels, where they can be daring and experiment to such an extent. In a competitive context, public service broadcasters have to look at new partnership opportunities, of course, but they must also provide their audience with the right range of drama. They have to do what the market wouldn't do: provide drama with a strong cultural impact, train talent, and talk to everyone.

Until now, public service had been able to cover all the audience's needs. Now, it is probably not true anymore. So, for Christian Rank, they have to look at what commercial players are good at, and do what they are the only ones to be good at. For instance, a series like *Borgen* couldn't have been made by someone else than DR (and DR would never have imagined that it would become an international hit); but Netflix is very good at doing *The Rain*!

To know how public broadcasters can be useful and different, they have to keep a constant dialogue with the audience, but also with the creators. Three people cannot decide on their own what a whole country needs! It is essential to involve everyone to create a place where we develop new talent, new stories and new ideas on how to reach the audience. And having strong ties with creatives is also what allows us to make sure that projects will keep going in the right direction.



Yle works with different models. They used to do a lot of in-house, but are now moving towards working more with the production companies (who can arrive on the project at different stages). They are also doing more and more international co-productions which necessarily implies inventing new models.

VRT works quite a lot with production companies, in particular because the public service cannot benefit from Belgian tax breaks, so it is a way of raising the budget. But it is important to talk a lot and make clear what is important for you as a public broadcaster. VRT also has mixed teams, and sometimes starts developing ideas in-house to get the things they need, like they recently did with *Sense of Tumour*.

#### A complicated relationship with the SVOD platforms?

For Françoise Mayor, what SVOD platforms want is simply to sell subscriptions; but this means they have to have beautiful, attractive shows, and to have series that are local enough to seduce a local audience. In Switzerland, they have been approaching people to produce series for youngsters but for now they are not trying to compete with RTS. The market is so small that no one would be silly enough to produce series here! Maybe they could find an international show taking place in Geneva which could travel, but for now, they are not playing on the same field. The contacts between RTS and Netflix mostly consist of trying to sell RTS's programmes (like *Station Horizon*).

When you meet the people from Netflix they somehow want the same things: the good stories, good writers, and good series. They don't have to address public service issues, and they have so much money that they can just buy out the best talent.

Liselott Forsman points out that it is essential today for public broadcasters to start marketing their shows ("A Yle original"), as SVODs are so good at doing.

For Ville Vilén, they are still a "frienemy", but which feels less and less friendly. In this competition public service must find drama productions that will also attract people who watch Netflix. It's Yle's mission to attract everyone, including young people who like Netflix, for instance by making "public service reality shows".



In the Nordics, in addition to the global players, there are several local platforms : Viaplay, Cmore, and two mobile operators doing drama. The losers in this battle might actually be the small national commercial channels. For public broadcasters, association is the only way of having increased budgets for drama.

#### Added cultural value

Wim Janssen is convinced that a public service broadcaster has a soul, a history. They should know their audience better than anybody else. The main questions they should ask themselves are: are we with our audience, among them? What is the difference that we make? Are we raising a question in the group, as we should? Are we a brand rather than a channel? For Wim, public service broadcasters must have a strong and clear identity, helping people find their way. In this respect, the content matters more than the channels.

Christian Rank points out that the role of public service media is to recreate relevance. Platforms have great series but they don't create collective cultural relevance. Another strength of public broadcasters is that they can question a theme through several genres: the news, drama... Public broadcasters are better at having their cultural agenda inside the company than anyone else.

New players are not very involved in the territories. Netflix takes the money but doesn't invest much, Françoise Mayor notes, except when they are forced to, as in Québec where they now have to invest 500 million dollars a year. They make beautiful shows but they also take ours. So marketing is an important thing, as is the political fight to make them invest as much as they should. Today, they don't want to coproduce with traditional broadcasters anymore. "Could this mean

they see us as more dangerous now?"

#### Collaboration, the greatest strength

Collaboration is probably the biggest strength of public service broadcasters, Synnøve Hørsdal says, turning to Ville Vilén. The Scandinavian countries have recently developed a new initiative called "Nordic 12". Thanks to this collaboration, public broadcasters will be able to solve their problems together, and to produce a yearly quota of series (12). It will also facilitate the negotiation of rights and open up a larger market for series.

Françoise Mayor agrees that any alliance is a solution! It's the only way to offer quality series that we couldn't make on our own to the audience. And it is important to fight for the rights, as Netflix tends to lock shows, which then get stuck in the catalogue.

As a conclusion, Chistian Rank affirms that there is room for everyone on the market, but public broadcasters have to be very specific about what they do, what defines them, and let others do what they are doing, because for now they are not stepping into the public broadcasters' feet!

# HOW DO WE BUILD THE EUROPE OF SERIES?

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH **SACD****SPEAKERS**

**Nathalie Biancolli**, head of international drama, France Télévisions  
**Bénédicte Charles**, screenwriter  
**Anna Croneman**, head of drama, SVT  
**Alice Delalande**, head of the drama and animation service, CNC  
**David Kavanagh**, executive director, Federation of Screenwriters in Europe  
**Mikko Pöllä**, screenwriter and director

**CHAIRED BY**

**Guillaume Prieur**, head of European and institutional affairs

Guillaume Prieur opens the debate by pointing out that this debate, "How do we build the Europe of series?", is a very important topic and is also the common thread of this edition of Série Series. Are European series the future of creation? Today, this question is vital to all of the players of creation, the backdrop of which is a landscape in upheaval: on the one hand, borders are disappearing and the financial stakes are changing, with the arrival of giants with considerable resources; on the other hand, we are witnessing a complete mutation of the usages and ways of consuming content.

Guillaume Prieur presents the speakers of this debate. Nathalie Biancolli is the head of acquisitions and international drama at France Télévisions. Bénédicte Charles is a screenwriter and is working on *Mirage*, the first project developed by the new alliance between France Télévisions, ZDF and Rai. Anna Croneman is the head of drama at SVT, the Swedish public television. Alice Delalande manages the drama and animation service at the CNC. David Kavanagh is the executive director of the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe, which brings together the European screenwriters' Guilds and aims to improve writers' situation in Europe. Mikko Pöllä is a Finnish screenwriter and producer.

**A bright future for European creation**

Guillaume Prieur asks each speaker what they make of the future of creation in the current context.

Nathalie Biancolli predicts a future based on content. There is a lot of creativity in Europe, she adds. The American market is gradually losing creativity, with the presence of many remakes and the omnipresence of big platforms that look for subscribers above all else. Europe, on the other hand, has favoured creativity.

For David Kavanagh, it's evident: there won't be a rise in volume this year, but there might be one in quality, audiences and usage in Europe. He also hopes that writers will get the credit they deserve.

For Alice Delalande, what's important is talent. Networking must be favoured, as well as recognition. Creativity comes in large part from them, so they should be trusted and encouraged. Co-productions rely on the talent and those who support them, especially public broadcasters.

Benedicte Charles sees a bright future too. For writers, the advent of international co-productions allows them to compare experiences, to progress and to realise there is no such thing as a European uniformity, that diversity is their strength. Co-productions are multifaceted and convey more than one message, which means formatting can be avoided to an extent.

For Anna Croneman too, the future is in the talent. Broadcasters must be the first and foremost supporters of creatives and if they are, their future will be bright.

For all content, Mikko Pöllä continues, the audience will become international, globalised. The public doesn't care about a series' origin, they only care about quality.

**Alliances are the new trend**

Guillaume Prieur points out how optimistic these views are. Talking about European co-productions, he explains that two organisations have been set up in the first half of this year. Their aim is to create a movement in favour of European co-productions: the alliance between

France Télévisions, the Rai and ZDF on one side; and "Nordic 12", an association of the Nordic broadcasters who aim to create 12 series per year, on the other. Nathalie Biancolli and Anna Croneman are players in both of these movements. Guillaume Prieur asks them how the idea of federating the European public services for the benefit of creation and European co-production came about, and what the objectives of these alliances are.

Anna Croneman notes that the collaboration between Nordic countries has existed for a long time but that Nordic 12 will give it more momentum seeing as it will bring on the creation of 12 series per year, which is a big increase. There is a long tradition of co-productions in the Nordic countries that started with feature films, and was a way of dealing with the lack of budget in these small countries. With an increase in volume, audiences have gotten used to and enjoy watching series from other Nordic countries. Practically speaking, the series produced by the 5 countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland) will be broadcast by their 5 respective public broadcasters. One of the challenges is favouring the development of co-productions where each broadcaster takes on an equal part of the budget, as was the case for *Bron / Broen*.

The France Télévisions - ZDF - Rai alliance was born last May, driven by public service assignments and content evolution. They wish to differentiate themselves from the "Euro-pudding" co-production model that existed beforehand: the idea being, to develop projects for which co-production is natural, logical and not just so that it can be broadcast on all three of their channels. All the projects will be overseen from the early stages. The emphasis will be on content, rather than trying to be financially competitive with the exorbitant budgets of the big platforms. Practically speaking, the partners will have no specific obligation to produce together. However, they will get together every two months to discuss the projects, to reflect together as to how they want to proceed and how they want to evolve. The collaboration between these three broadcasters can manifest itself as co-productions, just as well as it can be pre-purchase or acquisition. For France Télévisions, it is important to

try and get a French writer on every project, as is the case at the moment on *Mirage*.

The transition from linear to non-linear always causes copyright issues. It's about working with public usage, whilst keeping in mind the primary objective, which is content quality. Writers are vital and as a broadcaster, France Télévisions will in no way try and displace them. Co-productions are a way of touching a larger, but also a younger audience. Today, three projects have been launched: *Mirage*, a French project co-produced with ZDF and Cinéflix (Canada); *Leonardo*, an Italian project, the development of which is almost finished; and *Eternal City*, currently in development.

Guillaume Prieur notes that there is a difference between the two alliance systems. The Nordics have chosen to share budgets and project quotas, unlike the France-Italy-Germany group.

The Nordic countries have a head start in terms of the free flow of programs, adds Nathalie Biancolli. Indeed, neither the Rai nor the ZDF broadcast French programs. Anna Croneman agrees: that's the whole point of the project but it's not only about money; it comes first and foremost from an aspiration of working together and to enable the talent to work in various Nordic countries.

**The role of institutions**

Guillaume Prieur questions Alice Delalande on the CNC's stance on the current evolution.

Alice Delalande underlines that today in France, around 870 hours of drama are produced each year. About half of them rely on foreign contributions. 65% of these contributions are used for 4.5% of those 870 hours. Foreign contributions are very concentrated, but not very present on the bulk and there are very few large scale co-productions. It is a major concern of the CNC's. There are around 2 large scale co-productions made per year in France.



The objective isn't necessarily quantity, but more the importance of maintaining a certain diversity and building a flourishing ecosystem. In that respect, the broadcasters' initiatives are pleasing, and producers are eager. There might be one missing link: the connectedness of the talent. This is starting to evolve though: writers are starting to mutually pick each other out, schools exist and this kind of breeding ground favours networking.

To shepherd co-productions from their earliest stages, the CNC launched an aid for co-writing and international co-productions. Eight projects have been taken on, four French-speaking territories have associated with France and two of the projects were supported by 50,000 euro bursaries. The idea is to organise collaborative and collective writing, hoping that these offers will permeate the market. The CNC will support 4 to 5 projects per year.

#### **The creative impact of co-production**

For Bénédicte Charles, co-production changes a lot of things... and nothing at all! Writing doesn't come from a desire to develop an international co-production, but from an idea. For *Mirage*, for example, it came from a desire to talk about Dubai, to make a spy series with a love story. What does co-production change? The budget. Without an international co-production, the series would never have seen the light. This brings down barriers that the writers would have had from lack of funding, because it makes it possible to write what they want to. The need to speak English hasn't been proven.

As a screenwriter, Mikko Pöllä thinks that these stories need to reflect the world we live in: our lives are increasingly international, so it is self-evident that series shouldn't be only national. The concept must take precedence and be understandable, regardless of the language.

In terms of working with others and other countries, screenwriters try and leave their flaws at home. It's a great experience, but it demands a clear structure within the creative team: who does what, what is each person's role, who says what, who has what authority? When that structure is set from the start, everything goes very smoothly. In terms of the language, translators must be provided, which takes time and



money, but the qualitative gains are enormous.

Guillaume Prieur then asks the channel representatives which types of projects they would like to support.

For Nathalie Biancolli, comedy is a challenge! When asked about language, she reminds us that in France, things are systematically dubbed, and that's not something that will change overnight. She insists that we shouldn't deprive ourselves of non-English-speaking talent. It is becoming ever clearer that not everything needs to be done in English in order for a co-production to work. For *Mirage*, the language is French, and the main characters are French.

Anna Croneman agrees. There is no use in everyone writing in English. A few years ago, broadcasting a subtitled Swedish program in the UK would have been unthinkable. Today, the new generation is different and will watch a good series regardless of the language. She points out that on one of SVT's projects, there are four different languages, and viewers don't have any problems with that.

David Kavanagh shares the same opinion. However, this debate is more widely linked with culture. It is said there are 40 or 50 different cultures in Europe and we should be proud of that. A report by the European Audiovisual Observatory notes that 11,000 hours of drama have been produced for European TV, against 4,500 in the USA.

In his opinion, talent is important, but we also need to restructure the way things are written and give more power to writers. In Europe, there aren't showrunners who cast, are on set, manage the budget, have their own production company... It's a model that hasn't been adopted yet. We need to rethink our way of involving the talent in the production. It's more a question of management in the field than training.

For Mikko Pöllä, it's complicated today for creators to guess buyers' expectations: some put forward international projects, when others require a strong local identity.



#### **How do we reach the audience?**

Nathalie Biancolli points out that in terms of genre, France Télévisions and their co-production partners are quite open. Historical series, depending on the subject matter, are suitable for co-productions. Fantasy and science-fiction are also interesting angles because the aim is to attract younger viewers.

We need to adapt to the way the public is watching series, in order to make sure these programs are watched. In terms of marketing, the partners are still in talks; one avenue is to simultaneously launch the projects in the different countries, the other, more ambitious, one is to develop a specific platform.

With the Nordic 12 project, these countries will have 12 months during which they can launch the series whenever they want. We must constantly reinvent marketing strategies and stay flexible on broadcasting deadlines, all the while making sure the rights aren't given away too soon, in order to reach the largest audience. SVT recently put a 7 year old series on the front page of their player and the audience figures were extraordinary!

#### **Copyright: the cornerstone of a Europe of series?**

At this very moment [June 2018], in the European Parliament, a directive on copyright is being discussed. Writers' royalties in Europe are an important topic and don't exist in every country. In these countries, there are very few writers and it is complicated getting information on how works are used and on possible remuneration. Studies are in progress.

David Kavanagh notes that the FERA (Federation of European Film Directors) carried out a study with 3,300 writers - screenwriters and

directors - who answered an online questionnaire. This study made evident their income, the number of productions and the uncertainties and difficulties that writers have. It brings to light the fact that writers have a high level of schooling, usually with at least two degrees. They have been in the industry on average 14 years and made less than €20,000 after tax in 2016. The French and Scandinavians made a bit more, the Bulgarians and Irish a little less. A considerable amount of writers have to have another job on the side.

He finds the system unfair and ineffective: how can such a dynamic industry favour writers, who are at the heart of the process, so little? How can we demand top-end quality and investment from these people if they can't live off of their work? Many writers don't have a choice but to sign bad contracts.

The directive on copyright would not bring about great change. Writers' talent is at the heart of the audiovisual industry and should be more respected and better paid.

Guillaume Prieur insists: the future of drama in Europe is in the content, but also in a new balance between broadcasters, writers and producers. Last year, in France, deals were made on transparency in order to improve the transparency of revenue. Negotiations are in progress to get interest after depreciation for French writers, so that relations are more balanced.

To conclude, Nathalie Biancolli says that there are plenty of reasons for being optimistic, and they rest on European talent. Together, we have many challenges to take on: funding creation, the evolution of broadcasting methods and usage and the financial distribution.

# BROADCASTERS' CONCLAVE



PARTICIPANTS 2018 :

**ARNOU德 BRUINIER, EO (NETHERLANDS)**  
**SYLVIE COQUART-MOREL, RTBF (BELGIUM)**  
**ANNA CRONEMAN, SVT (SWEDEN)**  
**BRIGITTE DITHARD, ARD / SWR (GERMANY)**  
**LISELOTT FORSMAN, YLE (FINLAND)**  
**WIM JANSSEN, VRT (BELGIUM)**  
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**ELLY VERVLOËT, VRT (BELGIUM)**  
**MICHELE ZATTA, RAI (ITALY)**

Introduced in 2013, the Conclave brings together the heads of drama of European channels for a convivial meeting behind closed doors, giving them the freedom to discuss key issues of the sector and their profession with their peers.

This year, broadcasters were asked to reflect on their audience and their mission towards them: what stories do we want to tell, to whom and why? What is their cultural role and responsibility towards audiences?

Year after year, the Conclave allows professionals to share their work methods, it enables the best practices of each country represented around the table to be shared and it creates strong relationships between European broadcasters.

## EUROPEAN BROADCASTING UNION

For the fourth year running, the EBU has chosen Série Series as the place for the annual seminary of its drama group, which brought together around 40 public European broadcasters.

**EBU**

# SERIES STORIES



## PERSPECTIVES ON CREATION

**European storytelling?**  
*by Walter Iuzzolino*

**Series: which stories do we tell, to whom, why and how?**  
*by Nicola Lusuardi*

## DO IT YOURSELF

**Novelist and screenwriter: bridges between literature and series**  
*Experts: Nicolas Beuglet (novelist and screenwriter), Bertrand Guillot (writer), Patrick Vanetti (screenwriter and director of the CEEA)*

**Filming in the Paris Region**  
*Experts: Stéphane Martinet (Commission du Film Île-de-France), Christine de Bourbon Busset (producer, Lincoln TV)*



## CREATIVE WORKSHOPS

**Knowledge transmission to nurture talent**  
*Experts: Hilary Salmon (Head of drama, BBC Studios), Anne Edyvean (Head of BBC Writersroom), Michele Zatta (producer, Rai)*

**Researching prior to writing a TV series**  
*Experts: Anne Landois (screenwriter), Peter Kosminsky (screenwriter and director), Tarja Kylmä (screenwriter)*

**Artistic collaborations: how to give the best?**  
*Experts: Christian Vesper (Creative Director of global drama, FremantleMedia), Tone C. Rønning (executive producer, NRK)*



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Série Series warmly thanks the speakers, moderators, participants, series teams, volunteers and all the partners which make this happen.



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