

FRENCH QUARTER AND TOTEM FILMS PRESENT

A FILM BY LEVAN AKIN

QUINZAINÉ
DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT
CANNES 2019



AND THEN WE DANCED

და დასაწყისიდან

SCENARIO: LEVAN GELBAKHIANI & EPASHI VAKHISHVILI. DIRECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHY: LISABETH FRIEDL. EDITOR: LEVAN AKIN & SIMON GELBAKHIANI. COSTUME DESIGNER: ANASTASIA KACHARAVA. PRODUCED BY: FRENCH QUARTER FILM & TAKES FILM. CO-PRODUCED BY: AMA PRODUCTIONS, JULIEN FERET, RIMV FILM, LUDVIG ANDERSSON, INLAND FILM, LEVAN AKIN & MATIAS SANDSTROM. MUSIC BY: SVETLANA KACHARAVA. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: SVETLANA KACHARAVA, LEVAN AKIN. PRODUCED BY: SVETLANA KACHARAVA. CO-PRODUCED BY: THE SWEDISH FILM INSTITUTE, JUAN PABLO LIBROSSART & MARIELENE EKMAN. WITH SUPPORT FROM: LA REGION ILE DE FRANCE, EN PARLEMANIAVI AVED LE CNC AND L'AUDEAUX CINEMAS DU PAYSAN, LE CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINEMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMEE, INSTITUT FRANCAIS, KONSTNARSNAHMNDEN. PRODUCED IN SUPPORT OF: ENTERPRISE GEORGIA. EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY: MATIAS SANDSTROM & LUDVIG ANDERSSON. PRODUCED BY: MATHILDE DEBYE & KETIE DANIELA. A FILM BY LEVAN AKIN.

FRENCH QUARTER FILM TAKES FILM TOTEM SVT * ile de France INLAND INSTITUT FRANCAIS KONSTNARSNAHMNDEN Mth

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POSTER BY AMAR ALJIC | PHOTO BY ANKA GUJABIDZE



AND THEN WE DANCED

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SYNOPSIS



Van jongs af aan traint Merab samen met zijn danspartner Mary met het Nationaal Georgisch Dansensemble. Zijn wereld komt op z'n kop te staan wanneer de charismatische Irakli op het toneel verschijnt. Niet alleen wordt hij Merabs grootste concurrent, maar ook zijn grootste verlangen. And Then We Danced is de Zweedse Oscar inzending.◆



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Levan Akin is a Swedish born filmmaker and his work often plays on class and gender. He most recently directed **THE CIRCLE**, based on the bestselling YA book. He has also directed the feature film **CERTAIN PEOPLE** which received its international premiere at the 2012 Tribeca Film Festival to rave reviews. He has also directed several TV-series for SVT Drama most notably **REAL HUMANS**. Currently Levan Akin is writing and directing a new TV-series for SVT titled **DOUGH** set to premiere in the spring of 2021.

DIRECTOR'S
FILMOGRAPHY

THE CIRCLE (2015)



CERTAIN PEOPLE (2011)



DIRECTOR'S NOTE



In Georgia there are three things that are upheld as the paragon of Georgian Tradition and National Identity: the Church, the traditional polyphonic singing and the traditional national dance.

The lead person I follow in the film actually shares the same name as me, his name is Levan and he is a dancer, I too used to dance when I was younger and I imagined being him in an alternate reality. I interviewed a lot of dancers and they all told me stories of how gender conservative and strict the Georgian Dance scene was. So I decided to set the story in this setting. The Georgian Dance would represent the “old” and the burgeoning love between two of the dancers would represent the new.

With this film I find myself really going back to my roots as a filmmaker, working in an organic way, where the real lives of the people in the film and what’s going on in Georgia now affects the story. It is ever evolving. Telling the story of young LGBT+ people and their struggles on a smaller scale but also showing the history and situation of Georgia today on a larger scale. This film will not only be a very interesting look into a part of the world not so many people are familiar with but also a heartfelt movie about the importance of being free.





DIRECTOR'S INTERVIEW

You are of Georgian descent but living in Sweden. How did this project materialize?

— When I witnessed some brave kids trying to have a pride parade in Tbilisi, Georgia in 2013 be attacked by a mob of thousands organized by the Orthodox church I felt I needed to address this issue in some way.

The fluidity and sensuality of the direction is quite impressive, could you talk a little bit about the shoot, were there any challenges?

— It was my first time directing in Georgian and I am not fluent and I worked with a lot of non-actors in existing locations. Everything is based on real stories I'd gathered and things were constantly evolving. So the research phase was very extensive, I lived and filmed the main characters a lot with my own camera. I think that is why I got so close to them, so intimate.

There were no barriers, it was not forced, it became completely natural.

How did you go about casting? Can you go through the actors and tell us why you chose them?

— I did a lot of interviews during my research phase and met some of the people who are in the film then. Levan Gelbakhiani, who plays Merab, I saw on Instagram first. He is a dancer and I had him write about himself t, which he'd then read to me every time we met. Slowly we built a trusting relationship and I was inspired by his surroundings and his life. I met Bachi Valishvili, who plays Irakli, at the regular casting where we tried him against Merab. There was instant chemistry, plus we found out that he had danced Georgian dance for 7 years!



“ I WANTED TO EXPLORE HOW A GREAT ENCOUNTER CAN LEAD YOU TO BE BOLD AND FREE

Do you go back to Georgia often? What is your feeling about the young generation growing up there?

— With this project I've been back many times. My parents are actually part of the Georgian diaspora from Turkey and I was born in Sweden so we used to go back to Tbilisi a lot during the USSR era growing up. I've seen Georgia in many shapes since then. The young generation now is like any kid anywhere in the world, everything is globalized and they grow up with the same pop culture. However, in Georgia there is a great divide between this generation and the older generation who lived during the USSR.

Do you have the feeling people are getting more tolerant towards the questions of gender and sexualities worldwide?

— Both yes and no. In many ways it seems as if we are going backwards in many European countries.

This is just my analysis but it seem the polar opposite sides are becoming more severe regarding these types of questions everywhere in the world.

Can you tell us a little more about the traditional Georgian dance culture portrayed in the film? How big a part does this dance have in Georgian culture?

— It has a very large role. All children in Georgia go to dance classes from a very young age, just like perhaps Karate plays a large part in Japanese culture. The inclusion of Georgian dance in the film came from one of the interviews I did with a Georgian dancer. Also, I know from my own family that dance plays a great part in Georgian history and culture. To juxtapose the traditional with the "new" Georgian dance was an obvious choice for the film. Initially we were naive and asked the prestigious Sukhisvilebi Ensemble if they would support us and help the film with dancers etc. We were promptly told that homosexuality did not exist in Georgian dance and asked to leave. The head of the ensemble then called all the other ensembles

in Georgia and “warned” them of us. This initial meeting sabotaged a lot for us and made our work even harder. We had to work under a lot of secrecy and pressure. Even having bodyguards on set.

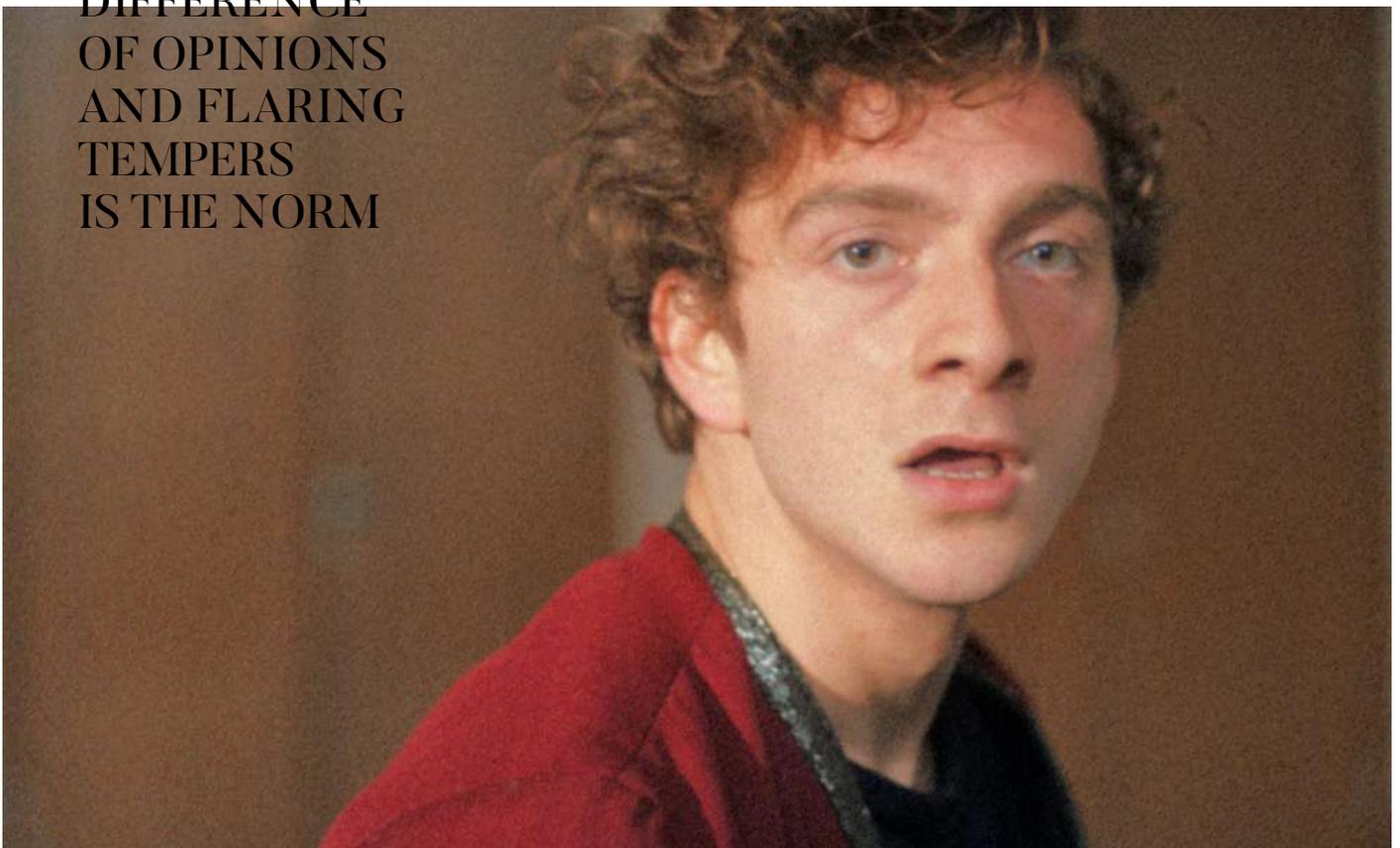
What was it like being in production in Georgia with your ties to the country while your main professional experience is from Swedish productions?

— It was interesting for sure. I realized how Swedish I am after all. But one time filming late night my Scandinavian cool cracked and the team was so delighted that my Georgian side came out! In Sweden there is a culture of consensus but in Georgia difference of opinions and flaring tempers is the norm.

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The story is a universal love story, can you talk a little bit about the balance between the universal theme and what makes this story at the same time very different from what we’ve seen before?

— To me the circumstance that Georgia and other former USSR countries are in at the moment is very fragile. All of these countries are unique, of course, and in Georgia’s case the strong ancient traditional values play a large part in the current situation. Western values are considered a threat to the old Georgian ways. And for a country that has been conquered over and over again throughout the centuries, keeping their cultural identity becomes a matter of survival. The Georgian language, their ancient alphabet, wine culture and food culture etc. are extremely important for them. With this film I am trying to show that even though you open up and move into a different direction you can still own and keep your traditions.





CAST

Levan Gelbakhiani
MERAB

Bachi Valishvili
IRAKLI

Ana Javakishvili
MARY

FRENCH QUARTER FILM

DIRECTION & SCREENPLAY	Levan Akin
PRODUCERS	Mathilde Dedye, Keti Danelia
DIRECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Lisabi Fridell
EDITOR	Levan Akin, Simon Carlgren
MUSIC	Zviad Mgebry & Ben Wheeler
PICTURE EDITING	N/A
SET DESIGNER	Teo Baramidze
SOUND EDITING	Beso Kacharava
COSTUME DESIGNER	Nini Jincharadze
SPECIAL EFFECTS	N/A

TAKES
FILM

TOTEM

AMA
PRODUCTIONS

INLAND

INLAND

svt

Swedish
Film Institute

ile de France

ENTERPRISE GEORGIA

COLOR · 16:9 · 106 MINS

PRODUCED BY	French Quarter Film & Takes Film
IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH	RMV Film AB, Inland Film AB, AMA Productions
IN CO-OPERATION WITH	Sveriges Television
WITH THE PRODUCTION SUPPORT FROM	The Swedish Film Institute
WITH THE SUPPORT OF	La Région Île-De-France

CREW

