

Official Selection

tiff

Toronto International  
Film Festival 2019

# STORIES FROM THE CHESTNUT WOODS

A film by Gregor Božič & Marina Gumzi  
Slovenia / Italy, 2019



## SHORT SYNOPSIS

Once upon a time, somewhere in a far-off land, lived an elderly husband and wife. The old woman fell sick and died, and the old man, a stingy carpenter, found himself alone. Pondering the life he had lived, he met a young woman, a chestnut seller who desperately wanted to leave home and find a better life overseas. Surrounded by nothing but the rudimentary nature these lonely souls share fond memories as well as contemplations of their futures. Should they remain haunted by a life that was, or does another path call, joining countless others on the rickety cart to a life unknown?

A chance encounter gives rise to a dreamy fairy tale about the disappearance of a small community that once existed on the Yugoslav-Italian border.

In the good old days when prosciutto still grew on wedding trees and cakes were baked under the bushes, when the Holy Three Kings travelled from house to house giving presents to people, and the front door of each house was wide open for anybody to enter, in those friendly times lived gorgeous creatures called Cifulins: half-rabbit, half-peacock.

But people started to believe that Cifulins brought bad luck, and so began to hunt them down mercilessly. When the very last Cifulin, the king of all Cifulins, had been caught and killed, a terrible storm came upon the Earth. It lasted seven days and seven nights, and the rain flooded all the fields and many roofs caught fire.

When the sun shone again, people realized that all the wedding trees had withered. Carefree living and splendor became a thing of the past. People started locking their doors and fearing what tomorrow might bring. Nothing was as it was before; everything had to start again.



*Folk Legend on Cifulins from the valley Benečija /  
Valli del Natisone, where the film was shot.*



## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS and PRODUCTION INFO

**Shooting format:**

35mm, S16mm

**Duration:**

81 min

**Language:**

Slovene (dialect), Italian

**Production company:**

NOSOROGI (Slovenia)

**Co-production:**

Transmedia Production (Italy), RTV Slovenia,  
DFFB (Germany)

**Supported by:**

Slovenian Film Center, Eurimages,  
MEDIA - Creative Europe, FVG Film Commission,  
Fondo Regionale Audiovisivo FVG, MiBACT



## CAST and CREW

MASSIMO DE FRANCOVICH – Mario  
IVANA ROŠČIĆ – Marta  
GIUSI MERLI – Dora

TOMI JANEŽIČ – dr. Toni  
ANITA KRAVOS – Cecilia  
NATAŠA KESER – Ema

JANJA MAJZELJ – King  
MATIJA SOLCE – King  
MARKO BRECELJ – King

directed by **GREGOR BOŽIČ**

written by **GREGOR BOŽIČ** and **MARINA GUMZI**

inspired by three short stories by Anton P. Chekhov,  
theatre play “Requiem” by Hanoch Levin and local  
tales from the Slavia Veneta

director of photography **FERRAN PAREDES RUBIO**

set designer **GIOVANNA CIRIANNI**

costume designers **KATHARINA JOCKWER** and **MATEJA FAJT**

make-up designer **BARBARA MOROSETTI**

editor **GREGOR BOŽIČ**

together with **BENJAMIN MIRGUET** and **GIUSEPPE LEONETTI**

sound postproduction **JAN VYSOCKY** and **JULIJ ZORNIK**

original music by **HEKLA MAGNÚSDÓTTIR**

producer **MARINA GUMZI**

co-producer **IGOR PRINČIČ**





### **GREGOR BOŽIČ, writer and director**

Born in 1984 in Nova Gorica, a Slovenian town on the border with Italy, Gregor has maintained a keen interest in photography since boyhood. He studied directing at Slovene national film school, Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome and at DFFB in Berlin. Apart from working as a film director and director of photography, most notably together with the director Matjaž Ivanišič (*Playing Men*, 2017 and *Oroslan*, 2019), Gregor is also a passionate researcher of Mediterranean pomology. In 2012, he conducted a vast research on old and autochthonous fruit varieties, in which he collaborated with old farmers from the Italo-Slovene borderland. It was during this time that he collected numerous memories and stories from the 20th century, which inspired him to make *Stories from the Chestnut Woods*.

*“This story draws inspiration from the Valli del Natisone border region between Italy and present-day Slovenia. We’ve tried to transmit the spirit of this particular environment that for centuries was prone to political instabilities and constant migrations. We wanted to create a fable-like parable about life and death in forgotten, abandoned places, a film to feel like a soft and distant memory.”*

## MARINA GUMZI, writer and producer

Studied dramaturgy, performance studies and film production in Ljubljana, Berlin, Ludwigsburg and Paris. After having worked alongside with performance artists for about a decade, she is currently focusing on creating and curating young contemporary cinema. Working as a producer and writer, she is especially interested in exploring new ways to communicate the issues related to environmental protection and conscious consumption.

*“Stories from the Chestnut Woods is a gentle film about fading of a collective imagination. Subversive naivety is what holds the narrative – a patchwork of anecdotes, memories, hallucinations and dreams – together, and that narrative is by definition fragile. It was never simple to explain why we are making the film about death as it happened in a godforsaken place some fifty years ago, and today I think it was perhaps our intuitive attempt to resist the prevailing sense of the end.”*





NOSOROGI is a Ljubljana-based independent film production company and a boutique label for cutting-edge, visually driven narratives by up-and-coming filmmakers. The company was created in 2008 by a group of young Slovenian filmmakers as a creative alliance for the production of their first films. Since 2012, NOSOROGI has been led by producer and dramaturg Marina Gumzi.

#### Recent filmography:

##### **Stories from the Chestnut Woods**

by Gregor Božič, 81', debut fiction, 16mm + 35mm, Slovenia / Italy, 2019

##### **Playing Men**

by Matjaž Ivanišin, documentary, 60', 16mm, Slovenia / Croatia, 2017

*Awards:* GEORGES DE BEAUREGARD Intl Prize - FIDMarseille; BEST DOCUMENTARY - 20. Festival of Slovenian Film; PRIX D'AIDE À LA DISTRIBUTION CINÉ - Entrevues Belfort; ARTISTIC VISION AWARD - DocAviv; SPECIAL JURY MENTION - Festival di Cinema del Reale, MASLAČAK BEST FILM - Underhill Fest, BEST FILM - Olhar de Cinema; BEST DOCUMENTARY - Fünf Seen Filmfestival

*Festivals (selection):* IFF Rotterdam, Sarajevo FF, First Look - Museum of the Moving Image, Premiers Plan Angers, ZagrebDox, True/False FF, DocumentaMadrid, États généraux du film documentaire Lussas, IsReal, Crossing Europe, DocAviv, Trieste FF, Olhar de Cinema, Camerimages

#### In development / pre-production:

##### **Fiume o Morte!**

by Igor Bezinović, documentary  
Croatia / Slovenia / France

##### **The Jungle Book Project**

by Gregor Božič, documentary

##### **Little Trouble Girl**

by Urška Djukić, debut fiction





## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Production



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world sales

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