



FILM MOVEMENT®

presents

## The Lesson

A film by Kristina Grozeva and Petar Valchanov

*"A definite must see film. Margita Gosheva's performance is outstanding."*

**-Toronto Film Scene**



**Bulgaria / 2014 / Drama / Bulgarian with English Subtitles**

**105 min / 1.85:1 / Stereo and 5.1 Surround Sound**

[Official Film Webpage](#)

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## **FULL SYNOPSIS**

In a small Bulgarian town, Nade is an honest, hard-working elementary school teacher struggling to keep her life together. Her unemployed, alcoholic husband has secretly spent their mortgage payments on booze, and now the bank is threatening to auction off the house where they live with their young daughter. The agency where she translates legal documents to English for extra cash is going under and unable to pay her what she's due, and a thief in her class has stolen the last few dollars out of her purse. With few options left, she solicits help from a local loan shark who is happy to give her what she needs at a steep price. With the repossession looming, Nade will resort to measures her former self, untouched by the realities of economic desperation and moral compromise, would have found depraved, as she makes one last extreme effort to secure the money she needs.

## **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

Nade is an honest, hard-working elementary school teacher struggling to keep her life together. With the home she shares with her husband and young daughter on the brink of repossession and no money to her name Nade resorts to measures her former self, untouched by the realities of economic desperation and moral compromise, would have found depraved, as she makes one last extreme effort to secure the money she needs.

## **LOGLINE**

A school teacher's morality is turned upside down when she takes drastic measures to stop the foreclosure of her home.

## **ASSETS**

Official US Trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9M0V2hgzNYQ>

Downloadable hi-res images:

<http://www.filmmovement.com/filmcatalog/index.asp?MerchandiseID=399>

## FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

### AWARDS:

New Directors Award—San Sebastian Film Festival  
Ingmar Bergman Debut Award – Goteborg Film Festival

### OFFICIAL SELECTION:

Toronto International Film Festival  
San Sebastian Film Festival  
Reykjavik International Film Festival  
Warsaw Film Festival  
Tokyo Film Festival  
Palm Springs Film Festival  
Goteborg Film Festival

## SELECTED PRESS

[*The Lesson*] is a blunt force trauma of a morality play, landing blow upon blow on a central character who is simply struggling to keep her head above water with a shred of dignity intact...The real achievement of the movie, an especially impressive one coming from filmmakers of relatively little experience, is that as a viewer you may flinch, quail and end up practically hiding behind your hand...there's no denying it makes an impact, and that Grozeva and Valchanov thoroughly deserve their San Sebastian win for Best New Directors.  
–Jessica Kiang, ***Indiewire***

Aided by Gosheva's convincing performance, Grozeva and Valchanov succeed in creating a captivating glimpse into the life of an average person forced to undergo extraordinary experiences.  
–Stefan Dobroiu, ***Cineuropa***

Loosely based on a real-life incident employed effectively by the filmmakers as a last-act plot twist, Kristina Grozeva and Petar Valchanov's "The Lesson" is a spare, stripped-to-essentials drama about economic stress and mounting desperation that should resonate with a wide range of international audiences. The naturalistic style of the storytelling is stealthily enthralling, as is the lead performance by Margita Gosheva as a provincial Bulgarian schoolteacher who is slowly, inexorably driven to the edge by crushing debt.  
–Joe Leydon, ***Variety***

## DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

Several years ago, the TV reported that a woman had robbed a bank in a small provincial Bulgarian town. Everybody suspected that she was a junky, a criminal...

Nobody suspected that the bank robber was a decent schoolteacher with two master's degrees. The way it sounds – "Teacher robbed a bank!!!" It was precisely the contradiction within this phrase that made us look behind the tabloid sensation. This event from our reality left a deep trace in us and made us ask ourselves – what makes a decent person become a criminal?



*Filmmaker Kristina Grozeva*

We wanted to tell the story harshly, as a part of life. We strived to be real to the extreme, to create a painfully authentic film story. We got deep into the teacher's inner world, we tackled her inner conflicts, her fight with her own morality.

One of the main tasks for us as directors was to develop rich and deep human personalities. Together with DoP Krum Rodriguez we decided that the camera had to be unnoticed and contemplative, to look carefully at the details and the action, without being obvious.

The film was shot in a real provincial town. Most of the small parts were played by real people, not actors. Our main actors had to blend in naturally, they had to partner with the non-professionals, and their performances had to be as authentic and real as possible.



*Filmmaker Petar Valchanov*

Our goal was that the audience wouldn't be able to tell an actor from a non-actor in the finished film. Margita Gosheva is a real discovery for us in this sense. After she read the script we changed some lines and situations, but the main work was done on set when she was put in the real situations with the real class of 30 children. The sense of authenticity and real life was leading in each element – make-up, costumes, set design, light and sound.

In the beginning we started shooting just different episodes of the film as a teaser while we were trying to find money for the production, but the cast and crew were so inspired by the story that they didn't want to stop until we had finished the last shot. Everyone worked for deferred payments and we are truly thankful to the cast and crew who were fully devoted to the filmmaking process despite the minimal time we had for the shooting, and the difficult conditions we were working due to our micro budget.

The film didn't receive production funding by the Bulgarian Film Center – just like our previous film, "JUMP" (which went on to receive numerous awards at festivals and was nominated for the European Film Awards last year). Both films we financed ourselves, looking for private investors willing to risk their money.

We're forced to make films without the support of the only national funding body we have in Bulgaria. Despite this we strive to keep making our films. *The Lesson* is the first feature in a planned trilogy. The three stories are inspired by the living reality, but we don't intend to tell biographical stories, we use this inspiration only as a creative start. The unifying element between the three stories is the theme of the quiet rebellion of the little person against the mercantile, soulless and cynical world we live in.

- *Kristina Grozeva & Petar Valchanov*



## **CREW**

### **KRISTINA GROZEVA, Co-Director and Co-Writer**

Kristina Grozeva graduated in Journalism from the University of Sofia in 2000 and in Film and TV Directing from NATFA in 2005. She has received numerous awards for her short films, among them Best Fiction Debut at the Bulgarian Film Academy Awards in 2008 for *Birds of Heaven*, Special Mention at the International Student Film Festival in Casablanca and at the Mediaschool International Film Festival in Lodz for *Gap* (2009), as well as the award for the best short film under 10 minutes by the International Student Film Festival in Montevideo and the Best Film award at the UK's International One-Minute Film Festival for *Game* (2006).

### **PETAR VALCHANOV, Co-Director and Co-Writer**

Petar Valchanov graduated in Film and TV Directing from the NATFA in 2008. His first short film *Shock* participated in the student program at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival in 2001. His next short film *Resurrection* was named the Best Film at the Velingrad International Student Film Festival in 2003. His short film *Family Therapy* was awarded Best Student Fiction Film of the International Film Festival in Wiesbaden, Best Film at the International Student Film Festival in Bucharest, and the JAMESON award for the Best Bulgarian Short Film at the Sofia Film Fest, among others.

Together, Petar Valchanov and Kristina Grozeva have directed the documentary *A Parable of Life* (2010) and the TV feature *Forced Landing* (2010, awarded Best TV film at Golden Rose International Film Festival in Bulgaria and the Grand Prix for best TV film at the Berdyansk Film Festival in Ukraine). Recently they wrote and directed the short film *Jump*, which was awarded with a Nomination at the European Film Awards, making it the first Bulgarian short film ever nominated for EFA. *Jump* was also awarded with the Grand Prix at the Brussels Short Film Festival, the Excellence Award for Best Picture at the Busan International Short Film Festival, and the Best Short Film Award by the Bulgarian Film Academy 2013 (shared with *The Paraffin Prince*). It also received a Special Mention from the Jury at the Festival International du Cinéma Méditerranéen de Montpellier and was officially selected in over 20 international film festivals.

## **SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY**

2014 The Lesson  
2012 Jump  
2010 Forced Landing  
2010 A Parable of Life  
2009 Gap  
2008 Family Therapy  
2006 Game

## CAST

### **MARGITA GOSHEVA, Nadezhda – The Teacher**

Margita Gosheva has 16 years of professional experience spanning over twenty roles in plays, features, short films, international projects and a TV series. She holds a Bachelor Degree in Acting for Drama Theater from the NAFTA and has taken part in many workshops since. She was most acclaimed for her performances in plays such as *Faust Exhausted*, *Winter's Tale*, *Seagull* and *Juliet. The Lesson* marks her first starring role in a feature film.

### **FILMOGRAPHY**

2014 The Lesson  
2014 Three Days in Sarajevo (mid length)  
2006 Investigation  
2002 Emigrants

### **IVAN BARNEV, Mladen – Nadezhda's husband**

After graduating from the Academy of Performing Arts in Sofia, Ivan Barnev has quickly become one of the most acclaimed young actors in Bulgaria. He is a member of the satirical theater in Sofia and is best known to film audiences for his leading roles in 2005's *Lady Z* and 2010's *Footsteps in the Sand*, as well as his supporting role in the Berlin winner *I Served the King of England* (2006).

### **FILMOGRAPHY**

2014 The Lesson  
2012 Where Is Maggie (TV Series)  
2012 Untitled  
2011 Sneakers  
2010 Footsteps in the Sand  
2010 Voice Over  
2009 Goat  
2008 A Farewell to Hemingway  
2006 I Served the King of England  
2005 Night and Day  
2005 Lady Z  
2003 Patu  
2002 Kalabush  
2001 The Falling Leaf  
2000 Execution I  
1998 Two Men Outside the City  
1996 Pasteur

## **CREDITS**

### **CREW**

<b>Directors</b>	Kristina Grozeva Petar Valchanov
<b>Screenwriters</b>	Kristina Grozeva Petar Valchanov
<b>Producers</b>	Magdalena Ilieva Konstantina Stavrianou Rena Vougioukalou Kristina Grozeva Petar Valchanov
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Krum Rodriguez
<b>Editing</b>	Petar Valchanov

### **CAST**

<b>Nadezhda</b>	Margita Gosheva
<b>Mladen</b>	Ivan Barnev Ivanka Bratoeva Stefan Denolyubov Ivan Savov Deya Todorova

### **About Film Movement**

Launched in 2002, Film Movement is a full-service North American distributor of award-winning independent and foreign films, based in New York City. Film Movement has released more than 250 feature films and shorts from 50 countries on six continents, including top prize winners from Sundance, Cannes, Venice, Toronto, Berlin, Tribeca and other prestigious festivals. Film Movement releases its films through numerous distribution channels, including thousands of art-house cinemas, universities and libraries; home video; television outlets; Cable Video on Demand (including its very own branded cable VOD platform—Film Festival on Demand—available in over 40 million US homes); In-flight Entertainment; and broadband outlets. For more information, please visit [www.filmmovement.com](http://www.filmmovement.com).