



IF I WANT TO WHISTLE, I WHISTLE

Directed by Florin Serban

"Outstanding! A worthy addition to the new wave of Romanian cinema." - Dan Fainaru, Screen International



**Romania | 2010 | Thriller-Drama | In Romanian with English Subtitles
94 min. | 1:1.85 | Dolby Digital**

Film Movement Press Contact:

Claire Weingarten | 109 W. 27th Street, Suite 9B | New York, NY 10001
tel: (212) 941-7744 x 208 | fax: (212) 941-7812 | claire@filmmovement.com

Film Movement Theatrical Contact:

Rebeca Conget | 109 W. 27th Street, Suite 9B | New York, NY 10001
tel: (212) 941-7744 x 213 | fax: (212) 941-7812 | rebeca@filmmovement.com

SYNOPSIS

Silviu has only two weeks left before his release from a hostile juvenile detention center. But when his mother, who abandoned him long ago, returns to take his younger brother away - a brother Silviu raised like a son - those two weeks become an eternity. While his outcries for help fall on deaf ears, he finds himself mercilessly taunted and harassed by the other inmates. And just as Silviu's frustration evolves into full-throttled aggression, he is introduced to a beautiful social worker that he can only dream of being close to. Faced with a slew of conflicting emotions and wild with desperation, Silviu is driven to a surprising act of defiance as he makes a last grasp for freedom.

FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

Romania's official entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the 83rd **Academy Awards®**

60th Berlin International Film Festival (World Premiere)

NOMINATED – Golden Bear

WINNER – Grand Jury Prize Silver Bear

WINNER – Alfred Bauer Prize

WINNER – Best Feature Film (Romanian Days) - Transylvania Film Festival

NOMINATED – Discovery of the Year – European Film Awards

NOMINATED – Best Actor (George Pistereanu) – European Film Awards

OFFICIAL SELECTION –

Telluride Film Festival

Chicago Int'l Film Festival

Edinburgh Int'l Film Festival

Sarajevo int'l Film Festival

Sydney Film Festival

Pusan Int'l Film Festival

BIOGRAPHIES & FILMOGRAPHIES

FLORIN SERBAN

Director & Writer

Born in Resita, Romania in 1975, Florin Serban studied Philosophy and Hermeneutics and worked as a news reporter for various TV stations. He graduated with a Master's degree and then entered the film directing program at the National University for Theater and Film, Romania. During his film studies he wrote and directed short films, commercials, and TV shows for the biggest Romanian commercial television station. Florin Serban was then accepted into the Film Directing program at Columbia University, NY, where he was awarded numerous scholarships and fellowships and taught Theory and History of Film. He returned to Romania to make **IF I WANT TO WHISTLE, I WHISTLE**, his first feature.

- 2010 IF I WANT TO WHISTLE, I WHISTLE
- 2009 UNA Y OTRA VEZ (short)
- 2002 HALF OF THE CITY MAKES LOVE WITH THE OTHER HALF (short)
- 2001 MECANO (short)

CATALIN MITULESCU

Producer & Co-writer

Born in Bucharest, Romania in 1972, Catalin Mitulescu studied geology at Bucharest University. He spent three years traveling and working abroad in Austria, Hungary, Poland and Italy. Upon his return to Romania, he enrolled in the film directing program at UNATC in Bucharest. Since his graduation in 2000 he has directed award-winning short films like TRAFFIC (Palme d'Or Cannes 2004), his debut feature THE WAY I SPENT THE END OF THE WORLD (Un certain regard, best Actress Award for Dorotheea Petre, 2006), commercials and music videos. He founded the film production company, Strada Film, which has become over the years one of the leading production companies in Romania.

GEORGE PISTEREANU

Silviu

When the filming took place, George was still in high school. This is his first contact with the film industry. George was meant to be a musician. He studied piano for a long time and was part of the Opera's children choir. He wanted to study Canto, but a friend thought he would make a talented actor and advised him to go to acting classes. He attended the acting section at Dinu Lipatti High School, where he was discovered by Florin Serban. Now a first year student at the National University of Theatre and Film in Bucharest, George is grateful for the chance he got: "It's a great opportunity to have your first performance as the main part in such a film".

ADA CONDEESCU

Ana

Ada is currently studying acting at the National University of Theatre and Film in Bucharest. She has participated in many acting and choreography classes around the world. She believes that growing up among artists, writers and actors taught her to trust herself more – which was the first step towards acting. Her work for this film changed her perspective on prison and prisoners, as she got an unfiltered insight on their lives and mentality. As for working with Florin Serban, she is happy to have had such a strong but subtle mentor, who allowed her to find her way and develop a complex character.

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

How did the idea for the film come about?

Catalin, my co-screenwriter and Andreea Vanean, the author of the play *If I Want to Whistle, I Whistle*, visited a re-education center more than ten years ago. Andreea then wrote the play and Catalin the first draft of the script. Two years ago, Catalin sent it to me and asked me if I wanted to work on it. I read it and couldn't take my mind off it. I've worked on the story for a year and a half. It went through a lot of changes and countless drafts. But the crucial changes came when I first started working with the boys from the penitentiary. During this time I started to get to know them, to understand some of the reasons for their mistakes, to finally understand how many of their actions had been influenced by their families, the environment they come from and last, but not least, by all of us, the ones outside those prison walls.

Which elements of the film go back to the original play? What did you add or change?

We had to change a lot to adapt from the original play to the medium of film, with its different restrictions, and of course quite different audience. The most important things that we kept were the spirit and attitude of the inmates; the bold, uncompromising, somehow childish way of thinking and jumping into action without caring too much for the consequences. The determination of reaching a goal no matter what it takes to get there. The title was kept from the original play, as well as the kidnapping of the girl. We focused on Silviu. We considerably changed his character; he is more human, more vulnerable than in the play, and the reasons for his actions are different. We fought to make him more sympathetic, more likeable. We took away a sort of dreamlike feel that was surrounding his escape. In fact, we changed quite a few details. The character of the mother and his younger brother were all additions, as is the motif of his approaching release from prison. Also the dynamic inside the prison hierarchy, Ursu's character, and we added more humanity and nuances to the head of the penitentiary. Finally, we also changed the ending.

How did you work with the nonprofessional actors who were real convicts?

Working with the boys took more than two months, and it consisted of an acting workshop held in two of the Minors and Youth Penitentiaries in Romania: Craiova and Tichilesti. First criteria for the selection was their willingness to be part of the project, then their seriousness. However, even if I had only considered these two aspects, I would have ended up with more than a hundred boys. The ones who were selected to act in the film were the boys who proved to be talented, serious, committed and who didn't have major misbehavior problems in previous months. I wasn't expecting to find

children so committed, so willing to do something. Many are very clever and naturally sharp from the years spent in prisons and orphanages. Some of them are incredibly talented, some were born to be actors and I hope, with all my heart, to be able to work with at least two of them on my future projects. I'm even thinking about writing a screenplay for one of them. Working with them has been a real joy, and a chance for great discovery. It was one of those experiences that mark you forever. I hope these feelings are mutual. The hardest challenge was to gain their trust. To make them realize that I'm not using them or patronizing them, that I consider them normal children who made mistakes. Some of them have done terrible things, but I didn't once judge them for this. They are being judged too fast. Things change fundamentally the moment people start seeing them differently, not just as a statement in a record or a tabloid article. Generally, these children look at opportunities you offer them very differently than those outside bars, and they open their hearts, in a way other children will never do. There's no secret here, all you have to do is grant them the respect that every human being deserves.

How did you choose your cast?

The casting for the lead role took seven months. I saw thousands of photos, interviewed hundreds of boys. I saw young actors, acting students, boys from different high schools, junior football teams, casting agencies. He was hard to find because he had to fulfill more requirements than normal: charisma, poise, intelligence, a strong presence and a personality to match. He would then need the ability to "close his eyes" and allow himself to be carried by his emotions. To act, in other words. There were many boys who had one or more qualities, but George was the only one who had them all. This part was his first attempt to act, and I think that this was a great advantage. George has a rarely seen freshness in his acting, and this may also be due to the fact that he is still "raw". Were there disadvantages in this being his first part? I don't think so. I think he was very professional and he showed a lot of strength, and this is what the character needed. Since we both found a way to communicate, things worked out well. There were times at rehearsals and during the shooting when we thought we'd never get through it, moments when we improvised within the screenplay limits. George is now a first year student at the Theatre and Film School, and I can only hope he will perform as well from now on. The casting for the girl's part wasn't a piece of cake either. Ada was initially requested for another part (which was removed afterwards), she was tested for more than 6 months. I worked differently with Ada; she has an electrifying presence, a huge talent, strength and will to work.

What is your next project?

I want to open an acting school, an acting class for people who never had anything to do with acting before. The work with the inmates, both on the set, but especially during the months of the acting workshop inside the

prison, affected me in many ways. It was a chance for me to dive into a world that I had only heard of, it opened the doors of a belief that I had only touched upon. Working with non-professional actors gives you satisfaction on many levels, both professional and spiritual. It's a great challenge, the line between success and failure is very thin, blurred, you can be charmed by their innocence and fail as a director. However, I truly believe that often with non-actors you can get fine performances and you can reach grounds you can never reach with professionals, although naturally I don't believe non-professional actors are the choice for every role. Getting to know the kids in the prison, I realized that what they lacked the most was love and attention, year after year this translates into lack of confidence. I think acting can help in this situation, and I tend to believe it helped here. For somebody who has only heard that they are good at nothing and less than a dog in the street, it's a HUGE thing to realize that he can engage an audience with his simple presence, with one smile, one gesture and that he can make 200 people laugh or shiver at once. This builds self confidence and can bring a change. The idea of an acting school started from this workshop. I truly believe that what happened with the inmates can happen with normal, average people. Even more, much more than that. I imagine a place where people can act out their inner demons and explore places that can only be dreamed of. I deeply believe in acting as a healing process. And I also hope this work will help me find talents for my future projects, as the work with the young detainees did.

Who are your influences as a filmmaker?

I love Bresson and Almodovar. I am fascinated by N. B. Ceylan, Bruno Dumont and Ken Loach. I can't wait to get old and make movies like Ozu, but in the meantime I want to make a movie like *Gladiator*.

CREDITS

CREW

Director	FLORIN SERBAN
Producers	CATALIN MITULESCU, DANIEL MITULESCU
Co-Producers	FREDRIK ZANDER, TOMAS ESKILSSON
Executive Producer	FLORENTINA ONEA
Associated Producers	VICTOR MAVRODINEANU, MARCIAN LAZAR
Production Supervisor	RUXANDRA SLOTEA
Screenplay	CATALIN MITULESCU, FLORIN SERBAN
Based on the play	<i>EU CAND VREAU SA FLUIER, FLUIER</i> by ANDREEA VALEAN
Director of Photography	MARIUS PANDURU
Editor	CATALIN F. CRISTUTIU, SORIN BAICAN
Sound	THOMAS HUHN, ANDREAS FRANCK, FLORIN TABACARU, GELU COSTACHE
Production design	ANA IONECI
Costume Design	AUGUSTINA STANCIU
Casting	EMIL SLOTEA

CAST

Silviu	GEORGE PISTEREANU
Ana	ADA CONDEESCU
Mother	CLARA VODA
Director	MIHAI CONSTANTIN
The Brother	MARIAN BRATU
Ursu	CHILIBAR PAPAN
Soare	MIHAI SVORISTEANU
Finu	ALEXANDRU MITITELU
Blondu	CRISTIAN DUMITRU
Psychologist	LAURENTIU BANESCU