



SONIC PRESENTS

# The Island with live accompaniment by the Balanescu Ensemble

## The Island

Director: Anca Damian

Production Company: Aparte Film

Co-production: Komadolli, Special Touch Studio, Take Five, Minds, Meet and Amopix

Producer: Anca Damian

Co-producers: Augusto Zanolello,

Joachim Herisse, Sebastien Onomo,

Gregory Zalcman, Tomas Leyers, Mathieu Rolin,

Alon Knoll

Screenplay: Anca Damian, Augusto Zanolello

inspired by the theatrical play *The Island* by Gellu Naum and by the concert *The Island* by Ada Milea and Alexander Bălănescu

Art Director: Gina Thorstensen

Character Designers: Mathieu Labaye,

Gina Thorstensen, Jordan Bruner

Editing: Dana Bunesco

Background Artists: Gina Thorstensen,

Jordan Bruner, Patrice Garcia

2D Key Animators: Dan Panătescu,

Mathieu Labaye

Animators: Gilles Cuveillier, Radu C. Pop

Music: Alexander Bălănescu, Ada Milea

Sound Design: Gert Janssen

Sound Mixer: Benoit Biral

Romania-France-Belgium 2021

84 mins

Digital

+ Q&A with director Anca Damian and composer Alexander Balanescu

A subversive take on *Robinson Crusoe*, Anca Damian's film introduces us to an exile on an island who finds common ground with a survivor from a shipwrecked migrant boat. With issues ranging from ecology to international migration, *The Island* successfully balances surreal imagery – including mermaids and pirates – and humour within a timely political context. Alexander Balanescu's score weaves the various narrative threads and action together, with the composer-performer's hypnotic voice playing counterpoint to the occasionally psychedelic animation.

Musicians include: Alexander Balanescu – violin, Una Palliser – viola, Chris Allen – cello, Patricia Auchertlonie – soprano, Charlotte Badham – mezzo-soprano and David Kent – technician.

This project is co-financed by the Romanian Cultural Institute, through the Cantemir Program – a financing program for international cultural projects.

## Director's Notes

*The Island* is a musical, an animation, and a cross-genre film. Post-modern is a key word, as the used elements, images, art references will get a different interpretation and a new reading.

The narrative pulse is linked to the animation and is meant to flow as a poem. Images and sound (music) are placed in the foreground, emphasising the fact that the film creates patterns in space, images-representations and vivid paintings.

Making of this film is possible only by means of mixed animation techniques such as collages, drawings, paintings, that seem to harmonise perfectly with the visual arts and music. The absurd and humour can be visually supported by the contrast of these elements, and, as a counterpoint, amplified by the audio/music.

The characters are archetypes: (new) Robinson, Friday, the NGO woman/Mermaid, Mary (Robinson's mother and also Friday's mother eventually), the Pirates, Grandma alias Mother-Nature. These characters having a surreal look, half-real, half-imaginary, emphasise both the 'surreal' impression and the lightness of a coloured and entertaining cinematographic show at the same time. In a Monty Python style, this visual metonymy will create a gap revealing the drama of the contemporary world through laughter.

(New) Robinson is someone who has left the society. He used to be a doctor before, an idealist sensitive to people's misfortunes. He tried to help people in need, the refugees, and was forced to give up due to society rules. In the hypocrisy of the current context, he questions his legitimacy as an individual integrating a group, a community. Is he allowed to make the choices of his own life?

He now lives, alone in his cabin, on picking things brought by the sea. In his solitude, Robinson is writing a journal/fantasy/dream of how he sees reality. This is done on his tablet where everything appears through augmented reality (AR).

Friday is the Refugee, the only one from his boat to have survived, when sailing from Africa to Italy. First, he becomes Robinson's friend. Tempted by the Mermaid to be free, he is taking the sea and becomes the king of the floating

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## IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

**TV Preview: Nightsleeper + Q&A with actors Alexandra Roach and Joe Cole, writer Nick Leather and executive producer Kate Harwood**

Mon 9 Sep 18:15

**The Quay Brothers in Conversation**

Thu 12 Sep 18:30

**The Quay Brothers: Short Films + intro by The Quay Brothers**

Thu 12 Sep 20:40

**Robin of Sherwood: 40th Anniversary + Q&A with director Robert Young and actors Nikolas Grace, Philip Jackson and Phil Davies**

Sat 14 Sep 12:00

**Mark Kermode Live in 3D at the BFI**

Mon 16 Sep 18:30; Mon 7 Oct 18:30

**Reece Shearsmith presents: The Elephant Man**

Tue 17 Sep 18:00

**The Thief and the Cobbler: A Moment in Time + Q&A with Imogen Sutton**

Sun 22 Sep 14:30

**Zardoz + Q&A with writer-director John**

**Boorman**

Wed 18 Sep 18:00

**60th Anniversary Screening: Dr. Strangelove or:**

**How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb + Q&A with Armando Iannucci, Sean Foley and Steve Coogan**

Thu 26 Sep 18:10

**Funday Workshop: Wallace & Gromit: Curse of the Were-Rabbit**

Sun 29 Sep 10:30

**Funday: Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit + intro by Nick Park and Merlin**

**Crossingham**

Sun 29 Sep 12:00

**Nick Park and Merlin Crossingham in**

**Conversation**

Sun 29 Sep 14:15

**TV Preview: The Life and Deaths of Christopher Lee + Q&A with Peter Serafinowicz, director Jon Spira, producer Hank Starrs and Christopher Lee's biographer Jonathan Rigby**

Tue 1 Oct 18:00

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people in search of a place to live. Later on, Mary – Robinson's mother – helps him recover his identity – his real name is Amadou. He is innocently trying to find a place in the world for himself and also for the people with no solution for surviving in their homeland. Friday has also freed himself from his condition in order to continue his quest, his desire for freedom and integration. The transformation of the character will be followed by that of his costume: he makes a blouse from the thermal blanket, which becomes a jacket while he gets on board of a ship, and becomes a superman costume while he saves other refugees from the smugglers. Robinson and Friday are in fact two faces of the same character, of the same human being, which are somehow opposed – one contemplating and passive, the other one active, yet both of them searching for a meaning in life.

While Robinson tries to escape his own reality by looking for *The Sheep-Shelter (The Lost Paradise)*, Friday acts, works, seeds the soil and saves people from the sea, creating The Paradise. As it is an upside down *Robinson Crusoe's* story, we reversed skin colours of the two characters; Robinson is dark-coloured skinned, while Friday has white skin. Loneliness is Robinson's leitmotif, as well as Friday's, and the song lyrics are poetically repeating it in new forms. I'm alone, I'm alone, I'm alone... but I'm alive... (...) A very important layer of this movie is the (absurd) humour, contained in the songs already, but we will try to enhance it in the characters' actions as well.

Production notes

Born in Romania, **Anca Damian** studied at the Academy of Theatre and Film Arts in Bucharest where she majored in cinematography and later obtained a doctor's degree in Arts, Cinema and Media. She worked as a director, screenwriter, and producer for several documentaries on art related topics. She was director of photography of two long feature films and several shorts.

Her second feature the animated documentary, *Crulic: The Path to Beyond* (2011, Cristal Award in Annecy), has been selected in more than 150 international festivals like Locarno IFF, Telluride, New Director new films, and received more than 35 international prizes.

Her extensive filmography includes *Crossing Dates* (2008), *A Very Unsettled Summer* (2013), *The Magic Mountain* (2015), *Moon Hotel Kabul* (2018) and *Marona's Fantastic Tale* (2019). Her films were distributed worldwide and she has been awarded with numerous international prizes, including Cristal for Best Feature Film Award at Annecy, Best Director Award at Warsaw, Mirada International Award at Madrid, and Audentia Award by Eurimages. *The Island* is her seventh feature.

Romanian born **Alexander Balanescu** is a prolific composer as well as one of the most visionary and exciting violinists of our time. As leader of the Balanescu Quartet, which he established in 1987, he has been instrumental in transforming the string quartet from a 'classical' ensemble into a musical entity at the heart of the rejuvenation of new music, through revolutionising its repertoire and its relationship with the audience.

Throughout his career Balanescu has drawn inspiration from his collaborations. To mention a few; in the world of dance, Pina Bausch or Meryl Tankard, in the theatre, with Pippo Delbono, Matthew Dunster (for the Royal Shakespeare Company), Chiara Guidi (for Compagnia Raffaello Sanzio); in film he has twice been awarded the Gopo prize (Romanian national Award) for best original soundtrack including 2016 *The Magic Mountain* (dir. Anca Damian) and the FIPA prize for *The Scandalous Lady W* (dir. Sheree Folkson, BBC films).

Balanescu has refused to acknowledge divisions between different musical fields, consequently working with such diverse artists as Michael Nyman, Gavin Bryars, David Byrne, Kraftwerk, Pet Shop Boys, Jack De Johnette, Ornette Coleman, John Surman, Goldfrapp, Depeche Mode and Grace Jones.