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ORAY

PRESS KIT

a film by Mehmet Akif Büyükcatalay

CAST

ORAY - Zejhun Demirov
BILAL - Cem Göktaş
BURCU - Deniz Orta
TANJU - Faris Yüzbaşıoğlu
EBU BEKİR - Mikael Bajrami
ABDUSSAMED - Firat Barış Ar
MUHAMMED - Kais Setti
SULEYMAN - Ferhat Keskin
HAMZA - Şahin Eryılmaz

TEAM

WRITER / DIRECTOR - Mehmet Akif Büyükcatalay
PRODUCERS - Bastian Klügel & Claus Reichel
COMMISSIONING EDITOR - Christian Cloos
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY - Christian Kochmann
EDITOR - Denys Darahan
PRODUCTION DESIGN - Jeannette Bastisch
COSTUME - Marisa Lattmann
MAKE-UP - Henrike Huppertsberg
CASTING - Kerstin Neuwirth
SOUND DESIGN - Armin Badde
SOUND MIXER - Henning Hein
COLORIST - Fabiana Cardalda
PRODUCTION MANAGER - Daniela Dieterich

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Runtime: 1h 40 min
Digital 2k
1:1,85
Color
5.1 Dolby SR

In coproduction with
ZDF/Das Kleine Fernsehspiel, Academy of Media Arts
Cologne & Mehmet Akif Büyükcatalay
Funded by Film- und Medienstiftung NRW
Supported by german films

World sales company - Pluto Film Distribution Network
Distribution Germany - déjà-vu Film UG



LOGLINE

Oray utters in a quarrel with his wife Burcu three times 'talaq', the islamic formula for renouncing marriage and as a consequence is called upon to divorce his wife. He is torn between his love of his beliefs and his belief in love.



SYNOPSIS

Oray utters in a quarrel with his wife Burcu three times 'talaq', the islamic formula for divorce. The imam of his hometown community informs him about the consequences: Oray has to split up with her for three months. He takes advantage of the forced break and moves to Cologne to establish a new life for Burcu and himself. But the Imam of his new community, Bilal, holds a more austere opinion towards the islamic law, which implies that he has to divorce his wife. Oray is torn between his love of his beliefs and his belief in love.



Interview with the director Mehmet Akif Büyükatalay

Your film tells the story of a young Muslim on the search for a way to live his faith in 21st-century Germany. Why do you tell that story? Is there a background to it? Is it autobiographic?

There's hardly any topic that is as controversial, and at the same time as persistently circulating in the attention of the public, as are Islam and Muslims. As a Muslim I just had to react to this fact.

To me as the son of Muslim parents of the first generation of Turkish immigrants establishing a means of existence and a Muslim community in Hagen, ever since I started thinking Islam has played a central role in regulating our daily life. What began in total affirmation – as an adolescent in the function of a youth representative, a preacher and even imam in the community – later turned into a critical examination, and today into a fascinated distance and critical view - all of which connected with a willingness to transfer it into my work as an artist and to pass it on to others. The film plot, however, is not autobiographical.

In all of your films so far you have concerned yourself either with the Islamic faith or with stories of the third generation of Turkish immigrants, young people who were born and have been raised and socialized here in Germany. Why are you interested in these stories? Why are they still perceived as stories of migration, and what, do you think, can be learned from these biographies?

ORAY examines the very strong need to belong of young male migrants and the problems it involves, originating in a hermetic microcosm which seals itself off to the outside world.

A community that creates identities (which apparently the majority society cannot, or is not willing to provide) and that procures security, but also demands self-abandonment in case of deviations from its "internal laws" – be it because of homosexuality or, as in ORAY, the marriage to a wife no longer legitimate.

In addition to the process of finding one's self within a coming-of-age film, ORAY deals with aspects of marginalization as a result of migration, in as far as individual identity is always shaped by being part of a minority in a segregating society.

A proverb among Germans who emigrated to North America

from the Black Sea says: "The first generation harvest death, the second, misery, the third, bread." I would add this: Only with their stomachs full can people be expected to emancipate themselves as citizens and to integrate themselves into society. I suppose that only over the next few generations the question of people's descent will become irrelevant.

Apart from that, the biographies of migrants have a particular effect: Studying exoticism, if it is appropriately read and decoded, can be a sort of mirror to society. Many people become aware of their own beliefs or disbeliefs only through the beliefs of others. It is the latter which make visible what is otherwise concealed to perception – be it from habit or general consent.

Your picture comes at a time, when the issue of Islam is mainly brought across via battleground topics such as Islamist terror or biographies of radicalization. What are the reasons? What do you hope for as far as approaches to the issue of Islam is concerned?

It is no secret that Islam, if one-dimensionally interpreted, can develop profoundly problematic traits. Yet, as any other religion, it is a complex system, which cannot be summed up in one sentence, nor in one film; nor can it be compressed in the dichotomy of "good or evil". I wanted to show the life of a Muslim away from the issues of medial attention, which is drawn only by negative headlines such as terror or burqa ban, since those issues do not matter in the life of Muslims. Their Islam is the Islam of every day, and of faith.

Since as a filmmaker I have the capacity to participate in the framing of issues and in influencing public perception, I felt it necessary to work on the way Islam is represented and to readjust its image where it is one-sided or, at worst, distorted.

What was of particular importance to you while working on your film?

In ORAY I have tried to render not so much a persuasion, but as far as possible to present a mere stock-check meant to provide an idea of the complexity of that system.

What easily gets out of focus in dealing with Islam is Muslims themselves – their psychology, their aspirations as human beings apart from religion; their emotions, their intrinsic ambiguity; their fears, but also their motivation. All of this, narrated through the individual, Oray, is meant to come to the fore here. That is why the film focuses on an individual person.

For me, to find the balance as a critical voice on the one hand, and as a mouthpiece from "within the ranks" on the other, has been one of the most important but also most demanding

goals of this picture. And it was attainable only by an objective, almost observing mode of narration. My criticism was to be shown by the mirror-like power of documentary narration. I wanted a film that comes from life, told by someone who knows this very life and is absolutely keen on telling it, because it finally must be told – and because it must no longer be told the wrong way. That is why I soon decided to tell it in a naturalistic mode of narration. The characters and their lives were to come alive more than my own artistic expression, and faster than any cinematic interpretation.

Having engaged a lot of young amateur actors and actresses – Zejhun Demirov has been awarded the Götz George Young Talent Award for his outstanding performance - how did you work with your performers?

To begin with, we took a lot of time and great pains casting appropriate performers, setting great store by the issue of “conviction”. Finding performers that were sufficiently convincing far as speech is concerned, essential to a naturalistic approach, was a challenge in itself. In fact the most convincing were actors and actresses with a similar biographic background - or performers that were familiar with the narrated milieu. That resulted in a broad mix of actors/actresses who were still in training, amateurs from the Hagen mosque community, or of Instagram influencers. Most of them were novices in front of a camera, but they all shared a familiarity with the narrated milieu, which enabled them to bring to life in a credible way the scenes of the script.

Who did you make your film for - and who do you want to watch it?

All those who are interested in watching a universal love movie set in a Muslim milieu.



FAIT CONFIANCE AU

The Director

– Mehmet Akif Büyükatalay

Mehmet Akif Büyükatalay was born in Bad Hersfeld in 1987, and grew up in Hagen. He studied film and literature at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne and was a scholar of the German National Scholarship Foundation. ORAY is his diploma movie and was nominated for the First-Steps Award for best feature-length in 2018. He lives and works in Cologne.

Filmography (Selection)

- 2019 ORAY (Feature, 100')
- 2015 THE BUTCHER (Short, 10')
- 2014 31 SCENES OF A YOUTH (Experimental Short, 10')
- 2013 BEFORE THE GATES OF IJTihad (Short, 15')
- 2012 ÖMER, THE LORD (Short, 10')
- 2008 HOW I LEARNED TO HATE SKIING (Short, 2')

Festivals / Awards

- 2018 Götz George-young talent award ORAY
- Nomination First Steps Award for best feature length ORAY
- 2015 Filmfestival Saint-Entienne – Special prize of the Jury for BEFORE THE GATES OF IJTihad
- 2014 Filmbüro Bremen Young Collection – Best Short for BEFORE THE GATES OF IJTihad
- 2013 Turkish Filmfestival Frankfurt – Best Short for BEFORE THE GATES OF IJTihad
- 2012 Winner of YAC (International Young Artist Contest), San Sperate, IT
- Scholar of the college for Music and Art, Montepulciano, IT
- 2011 Scholar of the German National Scholarship Foundation
- 2008 Hagen Cellphone Filmfestival – best Short Feature for HOW I LEARNED TO HATE SKIING



Zejhun Demirov

Born in Düsseldorf in 1992 Zejhun began his career as a member of the youth club of Düsseldorf theater. From 2009 to 2016 he played a leading role in the RTL TV-Series „The teacher“. In 2018 he won the Götz-George young talent award for his outstanding performance in ORAY

Cinema

- 2019 ORAY – D: Mehmet Akif Büyükatlay (Feature)
- 2018 ONLY GOD CAN JUDGE ME – D: Özgür Yildirim (Feature)
- 2016 DER EINSAME HOF – D: Christian Zipfel (Feature)
- 2015 DIE KLEINEN UND DIE BÖSEN – D: Markus Sehr (Feature)
- 2012 LITTLE THIRTEEN – D: Christian Klandt (Feature)
- 2009 ONCE UPON A TIME GYPSIES – D: Raluca-Maria Rasu (Feature)

TV (Selection)

- 2017 BRUDER – D: Randa Chahoud (TV series)
- 2017 EINE BRAUT KOMMT SELTEN ALLEIN – D: Arne Feldhusen (TV feature)
- 2017 HUBERT UND STALLER (TV series)
- 2012 EIN FALL FÜR ZWEI – MORD IM TAUNUS D: Axel Barth (TV series)
- 2009-2016 DER LEHRER (TV series)





Deniz Orta

Born in 1991, Deniz grew up in Bremen. After having studied Fine Arts at the University of Arts (UDK) in Berlin, she studied acting at the Academy of Dramatic Arts „Ernst Busch“ where she graduated in 2019. During her studies she worked for various theater and film productions, e.g. „Tatort Berlin“ (TV, ARD), „Dogs of Berlin“ (Netflix Series). She lives and works in Bremen.

Filmography:

2019 ORAY – D: Mehmet Akif Büyükotlay (Feature)
2018 TATORT BERLIN / Tiere der Großstadt – D: Roland Suso (TV feature)
2018 DOGS OF BERLIN – D: Christian Alvart / NETFLIX (Series)

Theater:

2017 DER WEIBSTEUFEL – D: Margarete Schuler / BAT Studiotheater
2017 DANTONS TOD – D: Peter Kleinert / Schaubühne Berlin
2018 WURM & KALB – D: Marcel Luxinger - Theater Discounter
2018 LOVE YOU, Dragonfly – D: Armin Petras - Theater Bremen

Cem Göktaş

Cem Göktaş was born in Pforzheim in 1987. He graduated at the Academy for Arts and Society in Alfter/Bonn in 2017 and was a scholar of the German National Scholarship Foundation. He lives and works in Cologne.

Filmography:

2019 ORAY – D: Mehmet Akif Büyükatlay (Feautre)

Theater:

2017 ALLES WAS ZÄHLT - D: René Harder – Theater Bonn

2017 DAS WEISSE ALBUM DER BEATLES – D: Michael Barfuß / Volksbühne Köln

2017 ROMEO & JULIA – D: Comelia Crombholz - Schauspielhaus Magdeburg

2018 DIE KLEINBÜRGERHOCHZEIT - D: Peter Kleinert -

Schauspielhaus Magdeburg





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