

ON BODY AND SOUL

A FILM BY ILDIKO ENYEDI





ON BODY AND SOUL

SYNOPSIS

The director of an industrial slaughterhouse is suspicious about Maria, the new quality inspector sent by the authorities. Endre thinks she's pretty, but she's too formal and keeps too much to herself. He also thinks she's too tough on grading the beef carcass, but Maria sticks to her standards with the same focused order she tries to run her life.

During routine company interviews, a lady psychologist discovers that Maria and Endre are having similar recurring dreams. They are embarrassed by what this implies, as the two introverts know nothing about one another outside of work. The following day, they check again: they had the exact same dream the night before. As they continue to compare dreams, it becomes clear that they meet each night in a common realm: a peaceful snowy forest where they are graceful deer who gently love each other.

Maria and Endre hesistantly accept this strange coincidence. They cannot ignore the intimacy they share so effortlessly in their dreams. For two people seemingly not suitable at all for love, it won't be easy to recreate in broad daylight this harmonious relationship of their lonely nights...

COMMENTS FROM WRITER-DIRECTOR **ILDIKO ENYEDI**

- THE HUMAN CONDITION

In all my projects the story comes about last. This one, as all the others, started with a strong wish to share my view about the human condition, about how we live our life. Also, it started with a strong personal wish to show an overwhelming, passionate love story in the least passionate and overwhelming way.

I read a lot of poetry, this is my refuge, and the real starting point was a poem by a Hungarian poet Agnes Nemes Nagy. Here are 4 lines of it, they served as the motto for the script:

*The heart, a sputtering flame to light,
the heart, in mighty clouds of snow,
and yet inside, while flakes sear in their flight,
like endless flames of a burning city glow.*

As a rather reclusive person I know how much can hide behind a placid, grey surface. How much pain, longing or passion – the heroism of everyday life. Walking down the street I watch people's faces and I know that even behind the most boring, dumb, clumsy one there can be wonder. So somehow I wanted to share this feeling: nothing on the surface, but boy, so much inside!

● MOTORS, SITUATIONS & QUESTIONS

The main idea for the storyline just came in one, single moment: what if one day you met someone who, at night, dreams the same dream you do? What would you do? Would you be thrilled? Would you be scared? Would find it funny? Or rather intrusive? Or, perhaps, romantic? Situations which function like motors are the best for a film. Situations, which create questions you very much want to get an answer of, then which create new questions again: If you get through the shock what would you do with this knowledge? Would you open your heart to this other person? But what if you are not the romantic type at all? If you shudder at the thought of esoteric crap? What if you have problems dealing with your own emotions? How would you face this stranger next day after your shared, tender dreams of the night before? Would you attempt to create the same intimacy and affection you share in your dreams during the day? But what if that is not going well at all? What if you are unable to properly get through even a measly first date? And what if even the second date was a catastrophe? And the third was especially disgraceful? Would you give up? And if you gave up, could you stand it? Could you bear knowing that the person who is your soul mate at night remains a stranger to you during the day? Wouldn't you just die? These questions lead us through until the last moment, because, even there, there is a question you wait for and an get answer for.

● WOUNDED IN THE MODERN WORKPLACE

The slaughterhouse in the film is not some archaic, blood-soaked abattoir. It is a neat, well organized, modern workplace sticking assiduously to all regulations. It is the mirror of our Western society. After losing the comfort of the ritual frames of religion (well, most of us), we found ourselves clueless how to deal with the most important moments of our life: birth, love, death. The ritual, the knowing, that you participate in a holy moment helped once to live these moments fully. Losing this solid frame, society tried to deal with these moments with practicality. This transforms you into an object, it transforms your beloved ones into an object. I know, because I gave birth to three children in hospital, lost one due to a medical mistake deeply connected to this inhuman practicality and I was beside my father in the labyrinth of health care during the last three months of his life. All I experienced hurts me deeply. Seeing the animals arriving to the slaughterhouse in trucks made me think not only of their death, but of the life they lived before. That narrow, restricted life completely deprived of the fulfillment of the call of their instincts.

My two heroes, Endre and Maria are not only introverted people. They are wounded. Their handicap is the sign of their inner, mental health. They react to an environment (here I don't mean the slaughterhouse but the whole of society) which is not cut for them – or anybody.

● IN THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE

We filmed in a slaughterhouse for one week (and, naturally, we were there several times beforehand during preparation). The owner is a self-made-man, he started as a butcher then progressed, he designed the building himself. He also takes care personally of the hiring of any worker. Our whole crew was touched by the natural, instinctive respect and tenderness in which these workers treated these animals. How they touched them, spoke with them. After arriving, the cattle spend one day in the slaughterhouse before dying.

The most heartbreaking was not the killing, the slicing, the process as a very complex being is transformed into an object in some minutes, but the living animals sitting peacefully, in silence, waiting to be killed. Their eyes. What I saw there, that unspoken fraternity, alliance between killed and killer, between these animals and the workers, had something to do with that knowledge tribal culture had: they hunted the animal, killed it then thanked it for the food. They thanked the animal for keeping them alive.



● AN IMPORTANT LIFE LESSON

It was an especially brave gesture from the owner to receive us, risking attacks from many directions. Outside working hours we were totally free (they slaughter animals only three days a week, on the other days they process the meat) but even though there was a disinfecting after us, we had to wear sanitary clothing and covering for our shoes.

But he also made clear that he would not let allow us to “play around” with the animals. For example, he would not let the cattle repeat the process of getting out of the cars and going down the ramp. I closed this man in my heart immediately. After, when he saw how we worked, a real, warm friendship built between him and our crew.

Before traveling there we sat down and spoke about the experience in front of us. Mate Herbai, my DOP and I were there already several times but for many of the crewmembers this was the first time to see such a place. To complete the experience our lunch was served in a nearby restaurant also belonging to the owner. The stew served there was the meat of the animals slaughtered in his slaughterhouse – animals we met beforehand. I think it was an important life lesson for everybody – to finally know how that tasty food arrives to your plate. We should know how our steak arrives at our table, as we should know how our iPhone or new clothes are fabricated. And then, with this full knowledge, decide what to eat, what to buy, how to live your life.



ON BODY AND SOUL

- ALEXANDRA BORBÉLY
AS MARIA

Many people who know Alexandra Borbély from theatre simply did not recognize her while watching the film. Who is this amazing young actress? I've never seen her! – were the reactions. The film shows the amazing range of her performance. In real life and mostly in her roles, she is an exuberant, outspoken, dynamic and really hot, sexy young girl. I don't know what made me think she is the one – perhaps the big trust in her talent. I think she is not only a very good actress she is one of those rare big actresses. She had to dig down deep and created this Maria so much from inside – it was a unique experience for me to see her work. During my career I was lucky enough to work with amazing actors (for example the two most cherished actors of Tarkovsky) but watching Alexandra to work was something I never experienced. This seemingly simple film was the most delicate, vulnerable of all. Everybody on board from prop man to gaffer had to focus in every second to the inner, driving force of the film (I could tell you how the salt-pepper shaker casting went by, what sort of funny discussions we had about the meaning of plastic versus metal or wood etc.) Alexandra, as soon as she found this Maria in her, was unable to make any mistakes. Her role is especially difficult as in her hardest, most important scenes she is alone, she cannot get energy from a partner's response. Maria's character goes through a deep transformation, a sort of emotional and sensual learning process.



She risks a lot by leaving her safe shell, she steps into the void. She goes through this dangerous process through seemingly simple actions: touching some mash potatoes, watching porn etc. It depended on the intensity of Alexandra's performance that these simple scenes could fill with tension, sensuality, erotic and humour at the same time. I am extremely thankful to her and hope this film will show her great talent for larger audiences.



- GEZA MORCSANYI
AS ENDRE

Our male protagonist, Geza Morcsanyi is well known in Hungary, but not for his acting skills. As the director of the most important publishing house for 20 years, he had a defining role in shaping literary life in Hungary. He acted with big knowledge, taste, tact,

authority and wise care of his authors' whole careers. He worked and was good friends with the biggest names: Imre Kertész (Nobel Prize for Literature 2002), Peter Esterhazy. A strong, charismatic person who shares a lot with our Endre. The grace, the inner integrity, the dry humour, the weight of personality. He has everything why this oldish, palsied guy who worked through his life in this so much not glamorous place can become our hero. I read once from a Hollywood producer a wise definition of what makes a moviestar: strength and vulnerability. (Just think about Humphrey Bogart...) Well, Géza has both. I wanted to tell a big, passionate love story - for that you need heroes you can relate to in a deep and complex way. Our two leading actors achieved it with radically different tools as they have radically different backgrounds, but, at least for me, they achieved it fully. His physical type made me think of Clint Eastwood in Gran Torino - a guy who decided that he is too old, he is out of the game - then he shows how much he is not, saving the life of a young man. Our Endre risks also a lot by stepping out from his miserable comfort zone: the "workplace + fast food restaurant + two beers in front of the TV" circle. By opening up towards Maria he risks ridicule, the loss of the last crumbs of self esteem.

● AN INTENSE OCCASION OF SOCIAL LIFE

I am deeply, personally involved in this film. I am Maria, or, rather, I was Maria once. After becoming a mother and having the chance to live a new, alternate, much less introverted childhood beside my kids and with them I became much more relaxed. I am an only child. A thin, silent, effortlessly good student as a kid. I liked school lessons and did not like recess. I was clumsy in social relations, awful in small-talk. But, as soon as we had a purpose, as soon as we had to make an effort together my communicative skills appeared from nowhere, I became a leader with natural ease, and was quite successful – without being bossy. For me filmmaking is a beautiful, extremely intense occasion of social life. On a film set where people are all working together in strong interdependence, you can experience that they forget about wages, about household problems and are focusing dead seriously on something which has one function: to touch the soul of other, unknown people around the world. If I had to explain to a Martian how humanity is functioning, how we were able to achieve so much from poems to landing on the Moon, I would bring him/her to a film set. There humanity shows it's best, most generous and most effective face. All sharing a purpose: working hard for making alive somebody's imagination. Somebody's dream.

● A MYTHICAL RELATIONSHIP

I think life itself is a mix of realism and dreams. Every day of your life you experience the constant mixture of both. Only you speak about one and not about the other. It is not by chance that the dream sequences are realistic in our film. It is a real wood with real, winter sounds, these animals are very much real, they are not the deer of fairytales. They do everyday things – what deer do normally. Drink from the creek, look for food, ruminate... The life of the waken hours is a bit abstract, shown with some slight stylization. The slaughterhouse as well as the two apartments are emblematic locations, the stages of a the building of a mythical relationship.

● WHEN I WAS NOT MAKING FEATURES

It would be so good to be able to say that during these years I, let's say, climbed Mount Everest or found a new vaccine for malaria or whatever. The truth is that during the times I was not making films I was uniquely focused on filmmaking. There was not one single day when I was not working on, pushing forward, planning, dreaming about or already preparing a new film. I have written five scripts, all of them got very positive responses, so, as they were not refused there was no ground to abandon them. Then, as time went on and on, slowly, it became clear that, somehow, for multiple reasons, none of them would be financed. It was a bitter, maddening period. Although I was teaching at the University of Film and Theatrical Art, loved and love teaching, and made smaller projects I learned how an unemployed worker could feel, how destroying it can be to feel not wanted when you are full of will and energy to work. Then, I was hired by a big factory and I was happy. During the last five years I worked for HBO Europe and the work with them was a real healing process. This was the first "assigned" work in my life, a remake to boot (of the series "In Treatment"). So I was a bit afraid if I would have the necessary trust, freedom and means for meaningful work. It was an immensely positive experience, very similar in intensity and depth to theatrical work. I am thankful to their executive team: they were wise and sure enough of their professional instinct to trust their own initial decisions to hire me and afterwards let me work in relative freedom and peace.

● ILDIKO ENYEDI

Ildikó Enyedi's first film *My Twentieth Century* won the Cannes Camera d'Or and was chosen as one of the 12 Best Hungarian Films of All Time and selected among the 10 Best Films of the Year by *The New York Times*. In addition to more than 40 international prizes awarded to her as a director, she has also received recognition as a screenwriter (Grand Prize of the Hartley Merrill International Screenwriting Prize for best European Script).

Ildikó Enyedi began her career as a concept and media artist. She was a member of the art group Indigo and the Balázs Béla Studio, the only independent film studio in Eastern Europe before 1989. She then turned to film directing and screenwriting. Her 1999 feature *SIMON MAGUS* won Locarno's Special Jury Prize, and 1997's *TAMAS AND JULI* won Belfort's Grand Prix.

Ildikó Enyedi has directed *TERAPIA* for HBO Europe, the Hungarian version of "In Treatment." She also has lectured at European master classes (Switzerland, Poland) and taught at the University of Film and Theatrical Arts in Budapest. She worked in Berlin in the frames of the Artist in Residence program of the DAAD. She was a founding member of EUCROMA, the European Cross Media Academy. In 2011 she defended her DLA paper "Summa cum Laude" in the field of Transmedia (*CREATED WORLDS / The Relationship of Technique and Fantasy in Moving images*).

A member of the European Film Academy, she was awarded the Balázs Béla and the Merited Artist Prizes,



and has received the Republic President's Order of Merit Cross. A mother of two, she lives between Budapest and Nordrhein Westfalen, Germany.



● SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

2017	ON BODY & SOUL	1999	SIMON MAGUS
2012-2016	TERÁPIA <i>(TV series)</i>	1997	TAMAS AND JULI
2008	FIRST LOVE <i>(short)</i>	1995	MAGIC HUNTER
2004	EUROPE <i>(omnibus film)</i>	1991	WINTER WAR
2000	GESHICHTEN IN GESICHTERN <i>(documentary)</i>	1989	MY TWENTIETH CENTURY

- ALEXANDRA BORBÉLY
AS MARIA

In addition to Ildiko Enyedi's ON BODY AND SOUL, Alexandra Borbély's other screen credits include 069 (069) 2012, by Kristóf Bécsey's 069, Csaba Fazekas, SWING, Dénes Orosz's COMING OUT and Fanni Szilágyi's THE AGE OF AQUARIUS.

Alexandra studied acting at Budapest's University of Theatre and Film Arts, and later worked as a trainee at the National Theatre. She is currently part of the troupe of Katona József Theatre. She has previously worked in theater productions by Hungary's finest directors, including Péter Gothár and Dániel D. Kovács.

Alexandra is Hungarian, but she was born (in 1986) and grew up in Slovakia. She moved to Budapest at age 20 to pursue her acting studies. She speaks fluently Slovakian, Hungarian and Czech.





- GÉZA MORCSÁNYI
AS ENDRE

Géza Morcsanyi makes his screen acting debut in Ildiko Enyedi's ON BODY AND SOUL. By profession, he is currently publishing director of LÍRA Könyv Inc. in Budapest, and has previously been managing director of I.P.C. Könyvek Publishing House (1989-1995) and Magvető Publishing House (1995-2015). He has translated many short stories and plays from Russian, including Stanislavsky: An Actor Prepares, and also many plays from English by writers such as David Storey and Sam Shepard. His other professional experience includes dramaturgy for various theatres (Pécs, Győr, Szolnok and Budapest) and consultant on several works directed by Péter Gothár (film and theatre).

Géza Morcsanyi, born in 1952, is married and has two daughters. He has degrees in macroeconomic planning and analysis from Budapest's Marx Károly University of Economics and in literature from Budapest's Arts Faculty of Eötvös Lóránd University.

ON BODY AND SOUL

(*Testről és lélekről*)

a film by Ildiko Enyedi

2017 - Hungary - 116 minutes - sound 5.1 - ratio 1:2.39 - in Hungarian

MAIN CAST

Maria	Alexandra Borbély
Endre	Géza Morcsányi
Klára	Réka Tenki
Jenő	Zoltán Schneider
Sándor	Ervin Nagy
Zsóka (Cleaning Lady)	Itala Békés
Mária's Therapist	Tamás Jordán
Jenő's Wife	Éva Bata
Detective	Pál Mácsai

MAIN CREW

written and directed by	Ildikó Enyedi
cinematographer	Máté Herbai H.S.C.
editor	Károly Szalai H.S.E.
original score	Ádám Balázs
sound design	Péter Lukács
production designer	Imola Láng
costume designer	Judit Sinkovics
assistant director	Zsófi Szilágyi
casting director	Irma Ascher
animal coordinator	Zoltán Horkai
producers	Mónika Mécs, András Muhi, Ernő Mesterházy

PRODUCTION

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As producers, we fell in love with the beautifully written script. And the film became a real masterpiece. It is a love story which is a bit about all of us.

It was a long journey to end up here. The first version of the script was written long time ago and Ildiko has polished it for a while. She imagined a special world, reality and dream. To create the atmosphere and the visual scenery of the film she has chosen her colleges watchfully. The cinematographer and the art director gave a great visual impact onto the film.

Ildiko has chosen a professional actress for Maria and a non-professional actor for Endre. It was one of our biggest challenges as producers, to understand how the professional and non-professional actor would be able to work together especially concerning the love scenes. We had a hard time to believe something really deep and artistic could come out of this. We were mistaken. Ildikó made a miracle with the two characters and polished them to one another. We couldn't see what she had already seen: they were just really good at acting together. As a character driven film, this couple was able to draw such a beautiful love story on screen as On Body and Soul.

The Producers of On Body and Soul



A photograph of two deer in a snowy forest. The deer on the right has large, dark antlers. They are facing each other, with their heads close together. The background is a soft-focus snowy forest. The entire image has a blueish tint.

ON BODY AND SOUL

A CONTEMPORARY TALE ABOUT THE PAIN AND BEAUTY OF
LIFE AND LOVE FROM AWARD-WINNING DIRECTOR ILDIKO ENYEDI
(MY TWENTIETH CENTURY - CANNES CAMERA D'OR).

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