

Pandora's Box

A film by Yeşim Ustaoglu

TORONTO
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When three forty-something siblings in Istanbul receive a call one night that their aging mother has disappeared from her home at the Western Black Sea Coast of Turkey, the three set out to find her, momentarily setting aside their problems. As the siblings come together, the tensions between them quickly become apparent, like the Pandora's box spilling open. They come to realize that they are very ignorant about each other. And in the process, they are forced to reflect on their own shortcomings.

Cast

Nusret
TSILLA CHELTON

Nesrin
DERYA ALABORA

Güzin
ÖVÜL AVKIRAN

Murat
ONUR ÜNSAL

Mehmet
OSMAN SONANT

Faruk
TAYFUN BADEMSOY



Synopsis

Early hours of the morning. In one of the mountain villages of western Black Sea region, on top of a hill, a wooden countryhouse overlooks a deep valley. An old woman, Nusret Hanim, shuffles the rose hips while watching the colors of the autumn. Then, the look in her face changes suddenly. Her gazes become totally vacant. Red rose-hip grains in her hand just scatter around. Then, she disappears.

Her daughter Nesrin and her husband Faruk in Istanbul, receive news of Nusret's disappearance. Distraught, Nesrin phones her siblings, Güzin and Mehmet. The three set out for the Black Sea in hope of finding their mother, but along the way they get caught up in their unresolved disputes and grief.

After several days of searching for their mother, they find her unconscious in the forest. The siblings decide to whisk her back to Istanbul with them. But once Nusret arrives to the city, she starts acting strange. They soon discover that she has Alzheimer's disease and they must learn to cope with it. Having to deal with their sick mother forces them to take a serious look at themselves; something that leads to unexpected results.

Because of the disease, Nusret demonstrates her own sorridness without hesitation, but she also shows profound insight into human nature. She occasionally comes back to the real world with a very clear mind and at those times, the siblings witness precious truths coming from their senile mother.

Nesrin's rebellious son Murat, who lives with his uncle Mehmet without his parents' notion, meets his grandmother for the very first time in his life. He is in quest of something different from what his mother wants him to do and tries to escape from the pressure imposed by his parents. Instead, he is now roaming around the city with his grandmother, ultimately sneaking her out of the institution where her daughters have committed her.

Nesrin and Güzin have lived their unexciting lives as if being carried on a conveyor belt. They are both busy earning their living and dealing with their relationships, and in Nesrin's case, her semi-estranged son. But when both daughters come face to face with their mother's illness and her impending death, their whole lives are disrupted. They realize how empty their lives are. By accepting their mother's regression, the three siblings somehow gather the courage to go on living with new perspectives: Nesrin lets go of her son; Güzin ends her meaningless relationship, and Mehmet puts his criticism of everything and everyone behind.

It is then Murat who leads Nusret back to her home on the Black Sea, which she is desperate to return to, to care for her beehives. Her house in the mountains is the place where she wants to be "released". Perhaps she also wants to go back to the peaceful place where she can die, once she is ready to do so.



Director's Comment

Pandora's Box is a story of alienation and isolation. It is a story of individuals whose lives have been shaped by a sterile middle-class morality. It is a story that many people, in developing and/or developed countries touched by the inevitable combination of capitalism and modernity, can identify with. It is a kind of human landscape, both universal and singular at the same time ...

Modern individuals

Lost idealism that is insidiously replaced by conformism. Elitist intellectuals whose living space has been narrowed because of their concessions to the status quo and to the slick politics that are strangers to reality. Contemptuous attitude towards "other people", prejudices, hypocrisy. Depressions, escapism, nihilism. Class differences and class conflicts. False relationships. Lack of communication. Sense of guilt. Fear and loneliness ... In short, everything pertaining to modern individuals is hidden in this Pandora's Box.

Our story begins with the every day life in the center of Istanbul, a city in which the very modern and the very traditional, in every sense of the word, are completely intertwined. And then the story continues on through the

journey of three people to the western part of the Black Sea region, which is characterized by coal mines and a working class way of life. This journey turns into an inner journey where the three protagonists sort out the conflicts long-kept in their subconscious, and confront the reality of themselves.

The cast consists of professional actors and ordinary local people.

Visual Concept

The dramatic structure of the story aims to delve into the inner worlds of the protagonists and is reinforced by the landscape images that pass by them, which mirror the psychological states of the characters ... After the images of the big metropolitan town, we see desolate country landscapes as well as some details of ordinary but innocent small life in the countryside. Maybe it is these details that lead our protagonists to unravel the problems that they have always been trying to cover up.

The tone is a poetic narration, created by the details of the real places and real lives that are much richer than our imagination.

Yeşim Ustaoglu





Yeşim Ustaoglu — Director

Filmography

- 2008 PANDORA'S BOX
(Turkey/France/Belgium/Germany)
- 2004 WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS
(France/Germany/Greece/Turkey)
- 2004 LIFE ON THEIR SHOULDERS
(documentary 38 min./Turkey/France)
- 1999 JOURNEY TO THE SUN
(Turkey/Germany/Netherlands)
- 1994 THE TRACE (IZ)
(Turkey)
- 1992 HOTEL
(short)
- 1990 DUET
(short)
- 1987 MAGNAFANTAGNA
(short)
- 1984 TO CATCH A MOMENT
(short)

After making several award-winning shorts in Turkey, Yeşim Ustaoglu made her feature film debut with 1994's THE TRACE (IZ). The film was presented at numerous international festivals, including Moscow and Gotenburg.

Yeşim Ustaoglu received international recognition for her 1999 film, JOURNEY TO THE SUN. In competition at the Berlin Film Festival, JOURNEY TO THE SUN received the Blue Angel Award (Best European Film) and the Peace Prize. The moving story of a courageous friendship undaunted by political cruelty, JOURNEY TO THE SUN swept the Istanbul Festival by winning Best Film, Best Director, the FIPRESCI Prize and the Audience Award.

WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS was awarded NHK Sundance-International Filmmaker's award, 2003 and the DAAD scholarship (The foundation of the German Academic Exchange Service), Artists in Berlin program, to write her new script WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS, the story of a woman forced to live for 50 years with the haunting secrets of a hidden identity.

Pandora's Box by Yeşim Ustaoglu

35 mm / 1:1,85 / Colour
Turkish with English subtitles / 112 min.

Director: Yeşim Ustaoglu
Screenplay writer: Yeşim Ustaoglu, Sema Kaygusuz
Producers: Yeşim Ustaoglu, Muhammet Çakıral, Serkan Çakarer, Behrooz Hashemian, Setareh Farsi, Natacha Devillers, Catherine Burniaux, Michael Weber, Tobias Pausinger
Editor: Franck Nakache
Cinematographer: Jacques Besse
Sound Recordist: Bernd von Bassewitz
Sound Designer: Philippe Buard
Sound Mix: Bruno Tarrière
Production Design: H.F. Farsi, Elif Taşçioğlu, Serdar Yılmaz
Original Music: Jean-Pierre Mas
A Production of: Ustaoglu Film Yapım, Silkroad Production, Les Petites Lumières, Stromboli Pictures, The Match Factory

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World Sales
The Match Factory GmbH
Balthasarstrasse 79-81
50670 Cologne / Germany
Tel +49 221 53 97 09-0
Fax +49 221 53 97 09-10
e-mail: info@matchfactory.de
www.the-match-factory.com

International Press
Stephen Lan
Lan.Stephen@sympatico.ca
Tel +1 416 923 6327

PANDORA'S BOX / THE MATCH FACTORY presents a co-production between USTAOĞLU FILM YAPIM SILKROAD PRODUCTION LES PETITES LUMIÈRES STROMBOLI PICTURES THE MATCH FACTORY with TSILLA CHELTON DERYA ALABORA ONUR ÜNSAL ÖVÜL AVKIRAN OSMAN SONANT TAYFUN BADEMSOY NAZMI KIRIK / Screenplay YESİM USTAOĞLU SEMA KAYGUSUZ / Production Design H.F. FARSI ELİF TAŞÇIOĞLU SERDAR YILMAZ / Sound Record BERND VON BASSEVITZ Sound Design PHILIPPE BLUARD Sound Mix BRUNO TARRIÈRE / Original Music JEAN-PIERRE MAS Editing FRANCK NAKACHE Cinematography JACQUES BESSE Associate Producer MEINOLF ZÜRHORST / Producers YESİM USTAOĞLU MUHAMMET CAKIRAL SERKAN ÇAKARER BEHROOZ HASHEMIAN SETAREH FARSI NATACHA DEVILLERS CATHERINE BURNIAUX MICHAEL WEBER TOBIAS PAUSINGER Directed by YESİM USTAOĞLU Supported by EURIMAGES T.C KÜLTÜR VE TURİZM BAKANLIĞI YAPIM DESTEK FONU - Türkiye CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA CINÉMATOGRAPHIE - France In co-operation with ZDF / Arte With the support of ING Invest Tax Shelter from Tax Shelter Productions Françoise Platteborse In collaboration with HUBERT BALS FUND OF ROTTERDAM FILM FESTIVAL WORLD CINEMA FUND initiated by the German Cultural Foundation in Cooperation with Goethe-Institut THE I21 - PREPARATORY ACTION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY SDC (Swiss Agency for the Development and Cooperation) Developed with the Support of MEDIA PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY NOKIA N SERIE AWARD - CROSS-ROADS CO-PRODUCTION FORUM GLOBAL FILM INITIATIVE Destekleriyle geliştirilmiştir

