

# FATHER

(Otac)

A film by Srđan Golubović



120 min/Serbia/France/Germany/Croatia/Slovenia/Bosnia and Herzegovina/

Serbian with English subtitles/2020/Cert tbc/

World Premiere and Winner of the Panorama Audience Award – Berlin International Film Festival

Release 2021 date tbc

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## SYNOPSIS

In a small town in Serbia, Nikola, a day labourer and father of two, is ordered to give up his children to social services after poverty and hunger drive his wife to commit a desperate act. Until he can provide adequate conditions for their upbringing, the children will be placed in foster care. Despite Nikola's best efforts and several appeals, the head of the social services centre refuses to return his children and his situation seems hopeless. But when Nikola discovers that the local administration may be corrupt, he decides to travel across Serbia on foot and take his case directly to the national ministry in Belgrade. Against all odds and driven by love and despair, this father refuses to give up on justice and the right to raise his children.

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Photo set for download [here](#)



## CAST

Nikola	Goran Bogdan
Vasiljević	Boris Isaković
Biljana	Nada Šargin
Službenica	Milica Janevski
Miloš	Muharem Hamzić
Sanja	Ajla Šantić
Službenik	Vahid Džanković
Jovanović	Milan Marić
Goran	Jovo Maksić
Radoje	Nikola Rakočević

## CREW

Director	Srdan Golubović
Scriptwriters	Srdan Golubović, Ognjen Sviličić
DOP	Aleksandar Ilić
Editor	Petar Marković
Costume Designer	Ljiljanja Petrović
Production Designer	Goran Joksimović
Sound Designers	Erik Mischijew, Corina Fleig
Sound Recordist & Sound Mix	Bruno Tarrière
Sound Editor	Nikola Medić
Producers	Jelena Mitrović, Boris T. Matić Lana Matić, Alexander Ris, Cedomir Kolar Marc Baschet, Danis Tanović, Danijel Hočevar Amra Bakšić Čamo, Adis Djapo
Co-producers	Meinolf Zurhorst, Olivier Pere, Remi Burah

With the participation of Film Centre Serbia, Ministarstvo kulture Republike Srbije , Eurimages, Arte France, ZDF Arte, Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung , CNC – Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée, Ministère Français de la Culture et de la Communication - Institut Français – Aides aux Cinémas du Monde, Croatian Audiovisual Centre, Slovenian Film Centre, Fondacija za kinematografiju Sarajevo, Creative Europe Programme – MEDIA, FS Viba Film, Slovenia

**120 min/Serbia/France/Germany/Croatia/Slovenia/Bosnia and Herzegovina/ Serbian with English subtitles/2020**

## SRDAN GOLUBOVIĆ

His first feature film ABSOLUTE HUNDRED (APSOLUTNIH STO) was screened in Toronto, San Sebastian, Rotterdam and Pusan, and won numerous international and regional film awards.

In 2007, Srdan's second feature film THE TRAP (KLOPKA), had its World premiere at the Berlinale (Forum). The film participated at more than 50 international film festivals (Toronto, Karlovy Vary) and won 21 international awards. It was also successfully distributed in cinemas worldwide.

CIRCLES (KRUGOVI), his third feature film, had its World premiere at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival (World Dramatic Competition) and won the Special Jury Prize. The film had its European premiere at Berlinale (Forum) where it received the Ecumenical Jury prize. The film was screened at more than 80 international film festivals and won 45 international film awards.

Srdan Golubovic also works as professor of Film Directing on the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade.

## FILMOGRAPHY

2001 ABSOLUTE HUNDRED ((Apsolutnih sto)  
2007 THE TRAP (Klopka)  
2013 CIRCLES (Krugovi)  
2020 FATHER (Otac)



## MAIN CAST

### Goran Bodgan

Goran Bodgan was born on 2 October, 1980 in Široki Brijeg, Bosnia and Hercegovina. He graduated from the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb. He is an actor and writer and has appeared in more than 40 awarded films and international TV series (Fargo, The Last Panthers).

He is also a renowned theatre actor, who has had major roles in plays such as Hamlet, Tartuffe and This Could be My Street. His latest film, OTAC (FATHER), directed by Srđan Golubovic, in which he plays the main role of Nikola, a father who is faced with the corrupt social services taking away his children, premiered in the Panorama section of the 2020 Berlinale.



## INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

### ***What was the inspiration behind FATHER, and what attracted you to telling this story?***

FATHER was inspired by an actual event and an actual man. When I first read his story, the father who inspired the film was already in front of the Ministry of Labour, protesting and demanding that his children be returned to him. I went there and talked to him. For days I went to see him to offer my support. I realised that there was something very special to his story, something inspirational and cinematic, a Balkans-style PARIS, TEXAS of sorts. I was also intrigued by the walking as an act of protest and freedom. I realised that walking was in fact the greatest and purest form of freedom, as well as of revolt and peaceful resistance. Then I thought about the hero and decided to make a film about a man driven by an instinct within, rather than by rational thinking, towards a profoundly personal and righteous path. He doesn't know exactly what he's doing, but his intuition is guiding him in an unknown direction, and listening to himself and his inner being, follows the path of humanity and purity.



***The film starts as a social drama, but then takes a quite unexpected turn, when Nikola embarks on his journey...***

I wanted the film to start as a realistic drama about a bureaucratic and corrupt society, and then slowly turn into a film about a man who, through the mythic journey he embarks on as a loser and castaway, turns into a hero. Starting as a social drama, the film becomes a fairy tale – a film about a man who tests himself, and reclaims his own dignity through his journey. He is not a hero fighting against the system, he's only fighting to have his children returned and assemble his family again. We live in an isolated world, in a sheltered zone, in which we have the luxury of thinking and talking about freedom and dignity, about ethical matters. However, the individual I talk about is condemned to one single thing – surviving. He can't afford the luxury of thinking about abstract matters, he's like an animal who has to fight for himself and his family to survive. This is what our hero Nikola is like. Through the conflict and contrast between the bureaucratic dramatic content and the fairy tale-like world of his trip across the country, I tried to make a film about a journey, a physical and emotional journey of an ordinary man.



***How do you think Nikola's character evolves throughout the film?***

On his journey, Nikola meets different people, some of them testing him and offering him a wrong path, others helping him and giving hope. He follows his own path and his instinct, listening to nature and finding his allies and travel companions among ordinary people, people just like himself, losers and castaways, and also among animals. Birds show him the way, a dog walks with him, wolves make way for him and let him pass, mirroring his transformation from loser to hero.

A particularly important aspect of this film is Nikola's relation to the landscapes he passes through, including the sight of devastated factories, one of which was also the reason for his journey. In contrast with this, there's nature, not yet devastated, beautiful, powerful,

becoming, during the course of the journey, a part of his inner world, his support and his guardian.

***Did you draw any inspiration for this film from other filmmakers or artists?***

My great inspiration was the Yugoslav Black Wave, films by Dušan Makavejev, Aleksandar Petrović, Živojin Pavlović and Želimir Žilnik. Their films are uncompromising and brave. They continually explored and analysed society, dealing with that reality in a fierce, in-your-face manner. They were on a quest for freedom of cinematic language and, more than anything, on a quest for truth, the poetic and existential. They managed to capture reality and turn it into a strong, special and genuine poetic and philosophical world, whereas today, our reality is much more irrational and insane than the films we make. In this film, I only tried to follow life and reality. I feel that directors of the Yugoslav Black Wave made films that were more interesting than reality. Reality has nowadays become decadent and improbable to such an extent that we, and here I mean directors, can't really catch up with it. And there's no fiction that can reach the scope of irrationality that we're living.

Another great source of inspiration while writing the script for this film was Werner Herzog's diary, *OF WALKING ON ICE*, his record of his three-week-long journey, from Munich to Paris on foot in January 1974. Herzog travelled through snow and blizzard, hoping his sacrifice would prolong the life of his ailing close friend, film critic Lotte Eisner. Herzog's intention proved successful and she lived for another nine years. In the film *FATHER*, there is a scene with a rabbit, which is a direct nod and homage to Herzog's diary.

***How was it to work with actor Goran Bogdan, well known for his role as Yuri Gurka in the Fargo TV-series?***

Our process was beautiful and the best part of creating this film. We did rehearsals for two months before the shoot, four or five hours a day, going through every scene, creating and building the hero's emotional map and analysing his every action and gesture. *FATHER* is a film of silence, and the most important thing was for the hero to be true. Goran and I agreed to build the character as though he was an untrained actor.



***How was it for you to shoot this film in the Serbian countryside?***

I made no attempt to portray reality as worse than it actually is. Unfortunately, the reality is what it is, as are the sights and locations of this beautiful and yet devastated country. I was born and raised in Belgrade, so I was not familiar with the locations in which the film was made. I found it exciting to discover my own country, travelling through Serbia, location scouting. I've come to realise the systemic effort that has been made here to destroy everything that could be destroyed. What ended up being utterly devastated is mankind, dignity and any kind of individual integrity.

***Do you think this story could have taken place in any country?***

Poverty more often than not brings out the worst in everyone. There's nothing nice about poverty. It's the same everywhere, it's universal. And yet, among the people we encounter in the film, there are the good and the bad. That's universal too.

FATHER is an image of contemporary Serbian society, but I think Nikola's fate could befall an ordinary man anywhere – in America, France, Korea or Russia. Nikola is a symbol of the loser of our new times, of neo-liberal slave ownership, a time in which man loses hope and the right to a normal life once he loses his job. The cruelty of these new times is veiled, shrouded in a bureaucratic, hypocritical form which, in the heap of rules, mechanisms and policies, seemingly protecting someone's rights, fails to recognise the crucial matter, fails to recognise man.

***Besides directing you also produce. Why is this important to you?***

I created the production company Baš Čelik with my friends and associates because I wanted to have freedom to be able to work as I want and in a way I think is best for the films I make. This is one of the best things I've ever done, as this freedom I have to make films is what matters most to me, as well as the possibility of preparing my films thoroughly and for a very long time. It also helps that the state of Serbian cinema is good, thanks to the fact that an active and stable Film Centre of Serbia has been established. More results of that are yet to be seen, I am certain of it. For the first time there is the possibility for Serbian filmmakers to have continuity in their work.