

GRADUATION

written and directed by
CRISTIAN MUNGIU



OFFICIAL SELECTION
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

ADRIAN TITIENI

MARIA DRĂGUȘ

LIA BUGNAR

MĂLINA MANOVICI

VLAD IVANOV



SYNOPSIS

ROMEO ALDEA (49), a physician living in a small mountain town in Transylvania, has raised his daughter Eliza with the idea that once she turns 18, she will leave to study and live abroad.

His plan is close to succeeding – Eliza has got a scholarship to study psychology in UK. She just has to pass her final exams – a formality for such a good student.

On the day prior to her first written exam, an incident jeopardizes Eliza's departure.

Now Romeo has to make a decision. There are ways of solving the problem, but none of them using the principles he, as a father, has taught his daughter.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The background of the page is a blurred photograph of a multi-story building, possibly a school or office building, with a person walking in the foreground. The image is out of focus, creating a sense of depth and atmosphere.

WHO IS ROMEO ALDEA?

Approaching 50, for Romeo Aldea, would be tough enough without his having made a few compromises. That was just how it was. Maybe it was how your parents raised you and what everybody was doing around you. Perhaps it was what you picked up from what the teachers told you; that this is all your mind, your soul, your heart was capable of.

And once you made the first compromise, the second and the third came more easily – you slowly made peace with the idea that compromise is part of life and that, after all, there are different kinds of lies, different kinds of compromise and all kinds of situations.

Well, had the world been straight and fair, you would have been straight and fair as well – if everybody around you had respected the truth and the law, you would have done the same. But unfortunately life is not like that, and



you don't want to be a *sucker*, a *fool*, a *loser* and so on. In life, you have to be flexible, to navigate murky situations, to decide in each case what is right and what isn't, how far you can compromise, what actions are acceptable to you and where the boundaries lie.

And once you make the first big compromise, there's no turning back. You cannot hit the reset button and start all over - this is it, you have to continue on the same path, for better or for worse. Because now there is complicity between you and those who have witnessed your actions, who have assisted you. They know your secret, they know something that you will be hiding from now on, perhaps forever - and this complicity makes you a prisoner of a web of connections, of understandings, of reciprocity, of guilt, of lies, a web that you will have to keep weaving. There is no way for you to be open and there's no turning back - it becomes second nature, part of your life. From time to time you notice it but you quickly push it out of your mind so you can keep on living with yourself. You tell yourself that, after all, things are not that dramatic, *it's not the end of the world, it's not like you killed somebody, it's just life.*



ONE DAY, YOU BECOME A PARENT.

That's when the self-questioning starts. What should you tell your kids? What do you prepare them for? Do you guide them on the path that you have taken, or do you encourage them to be principled no matter what, since their journey is just beginning and they don't yet owe anything to anybody? Naturally, as a parent, you want the best for them. But what is the best for them? And which world are you preparing them for - the one you grew up in, or the one abroad? For the real world, or for an ideal one? What should you teach them: to fight with all their might for their own comfort, or to respect others and fight for their values as well? Does the end justify the means?

The patterns of thought and behaviour that are generalized become the norm - they set the ethical boundaries of a society, including those societies in which everybody complains about corruption. Of course, we're talking about other people's corruption, not our own. We don't see ourselves, we are beyond reproach. You complain of being fed up of living surrounded by lies, you describe the cheating and wrongdoing as unbearable, you don't expose these acts or oppose them. What can one individual do

against a whole world that *is set up this way and functions like that*? Can one person change it on his own? No. Could one at least try? When the question comes up, it's already too hard, too late. Could one's children do it, perhaps? They might be able to try, but should parents wish that kind of life for their children? Don't we want our children to be happy and comfortable, and hope that somebody else will come along and set the world straight, with all the sacrifices that such an endeavour entails? Why should my child be the one to be sacrificed?

ABOUT LEVELS OF MEANING

Graduation is primarily an x-ray of the moment when you realize that most of your life is already behind you. You have made the important decisions of your life and here you are today. Often, life at this age doesn't look quite as you imagined when you were young. But this is it, there's nothing much you can change now. Still, there is something you feel you can do. Something that would give meaning to all the misfortunes you experienced: save your children, teach them well, help them make better choices than you





did. Yet it is not so easy to decide what is best to tell your children.

Graduation is a story about compromise and principles, about decisions and choices, about individualism and solidarity, and also about education and family and about aging. It is the story of a parent who is wondering what is best for his child, whether his child should get by in the real world or should struggle always to be honest and change the world as much as she can.

Romeo Aldea is at a moment in his life when he can feel the earth moving under his feet. He is not young any more, but he is not yet old. His marriage has been falling apart, his mother is old and sick, his daughter is ready to embark on her own journey. He is wondering how the world will look after his daughter leaves home, and how the next five, ten, twenty years of his life will look. What is he going to do next? He doesn't have any answers - he is just experiencing great anxiety and the pressure to continue the everyday struggle of daily routine and survival. But is he still truly living? And what can he do to warn his child, to guide his daughter so she won't end up in the same dead-end as him when she's his age?

The story of Romeo Aldea is also a story about a society and its institutions. Is

there a relationship between compromise, corruption, education and poverty? Can we educate our children much differently to how we've been educated?

The essence of storytelling for such a film does not reside in it clarifying all its themes or meanings, but in managing not to limit them too much. The language is always abstract, the communication is always imprecise, details sometimes convey as much content as the overall story. The specificity of cinema lies precisely in those details that can only be perceived when watching the film: a non-translatable attitude, an uncertain feeling, an opaque state of mind – things that cannot be put into words.

WHAT KIND OF CINEMA?

Graduation belongs to that kind of cinema that values reality and realism. Of course, it is *not* reality, it just uses everyday life events captured in real time, with no editing, to re-organize moments that *could have belonged* to reality; to a more organized and structured reality than real life.

The story respects the chronology of events but it remains subjective, limited to

the protagonist's perspective. Nevertheless, it aims to make you understand what he feels and what he wonders about – but only by observing him from a distance.

What matters is the truth of every moment. The director's own views about the moral questions the story raises, the actor's interpretation, the style of the shooting – nothing should distract you from watching the flow of events and reaching your own conclusions about the story, the characters, and the values and beliefs that are questioned.

Should the film manage to make you reflect on your own choices in life, your moments of untruthfulness or your past decisions – that would be a wonderful bonus.

We make films to tell stories, to ask questions, to deepen our investigation of the world around us. But there are many stories out there. As a filmmaker, you need to ask yourself: why did you choose this particular story? Hopefully because at a certain moment in your life it seemed like the most important one for you. And you felt compelled to tell it to other people, because you felt it would speak to them about something that matters.



CRISTIAN MUNGIU

Cristian Mungiu is a Romanian writer-director born in Iași, Romania in 1968. Before studying film, he worked as a teacher and journalist for the press, radio and TV.

His debut film, *Occident/West*, was premiered in *Quinzaine des Réalisateurs* in Cannes in 2002 and was an audience hit in Romania.

In 2007, his second feature, *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days*, was awarded the Palme d'Or in Cannes. The film later received several awards as best film of the year from various international associations of film critics. It also won the European Film Academy awards for best film and best director.

He returned to Cannes in 2009 as a writer-producer-co-director with the collective episodic film *Tales from the Golden Age* and as a writer-director in 2012 with *Beyond the Hills* – double awarded for Best Screenplay and Best actresses.

He was in the jury of the Cannes film festival in 2013.

Bacalaureat / Graduation is his fifth film.



MARIA DRĂGUȘ

Maria Drăguș was born in 1994.

While she was still studying dance at the Palucca University in Dresden, she was cast in Michael Haneke's *The White Ribbon*, in which she played the priest's daughter Klara.

The film, which won the Golden Palm in Cannes 2009, gained her a German Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress.

She has since worked in numerous productions, including *If Not Us*, *Who* by Andres Veiel, *Kill Me* by Emily Atef and *Summer Outside* by Friederike Jehn.

In 2014 she received the "Shooting Star" Award at the Berlinale.

Three of her most recent films will premiere in 2016:

Graduation by Cristian Mungiu, *Tiger Girl* by Jakob Lass and *Light* by Barbara Albert.

ADRIAN TITIENI

Adrian Titieni, born in 1963, is a well-known Romanian theatre and film actor.

He made his film debut in *Pas în doi/Paso doble*, which premiered at Berlinale in 1986, and has appeared in over 50 films to date. He continued acting in many shorts and student films, even after he became a well-known actor and the rector of the Bucharest National University of Theater and Film.

In the course of his career, he has worked with Lucian Pintilie for *Balanta/The Oak*, premiered at Cannes, 1992, Cristi Puiu for *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu*, Cannes 2005 and Călin Netzer for *Child's Pose*, Golden Bear in Berlin 2013.





CAST

Romeo
Eliza
Magda
Sandra
Chief Inspector
Exam Committee President
Marius
Vice Mayor Bulai
Romeo's Mother
Prosecutor Ivaşcu
Albu Marian
Agent Sandu
Gelu
Csilla
Doctor Pandele
Mrs. Bulai
Matei
Locksmith
Mrs. Mariana
Cleaning Lady
Girl's Mother
Boy's Father
Bodyguard
Soldier
Suspect No 1
Suspect No 2
Suspect No 3
Suspect No 4

ADRIAN TITIENI
MARIA DRĂGUŞ
LIA BUGNAR
MĂLINA MANOVICI
VLAD IVANOV
GELU COLCEAG
RAREŞ ANDRICI
PETRE CIUBOTARU
ALEXANDRA DAVIDESCU
EMANUEL PÂRVU
LUCIAN IFRIM
GIGI IFRIM
ADRIAN VĂNCICĂ
ORSOLYA MOLDOVAN
TUDOR SMOLEANU
LILIANA MOCANU
DAVID HODOROG
CONSTANTIN COJOCARU
ENIKO BENCZO
CLAUDIA SUSANU
PETRONELA GRIGORESCU
ROBERT EMANUEL
MIHAI GIURIŢAN
ANDREI MORARIU
KIM CIOBANU
CLAUDIU DUMITRU
MIHAI COROIAN
VALERIU ANDRIUŢĂ



MAIN CREW

written and directed by
cinematography
production design
sound design and editing
sound recording and post-processing
sound mixing

CRISTIAN MUNGIU
TUDOR VLADIMIR PANDURU
SIMONA PĂDUREȚU
MIRCEA OLTEANU
CONSTANTIN FLEANCU
OLIVIER DÔ HÙU

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VINCENT MARAVAL
JEAN-PIERRE and **LUC DARDENNE**
JEAN LABADIE

producer
CRISTIAN MUNGIU



Romanian title: **BACALAUREAT**
English title: **GRADUATION**
French title: **BACCALAURÉAT**
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Running time: **128 MIN**
Format: **DIGITAL, 2K SCOPE**
Sound: **5.1 SURROUND SOUND**



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GRADUATION BACALAUREAT

Written and directed by **CRISTIAN MUNGIU**
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