

Based on the play 'Tipografic Majuscul' by Gianina Cărbunariu

INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS

UPPERCASE PRINT

directed by RADU JUDE



70th
Forum

Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin

UPPERCASE PRINT

(Tipografic Majuscul)

A FILM BY RADU JUDE

Based on the play 'Tipografic Majuscul' by Gianina Cărbunariu
Inspired by true events

128min – Romania – 2020 – 1:1,33 – Dolby 5.1
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SCREENINGS IN BERLINALE

SAT. 22,	1:30 PM	@ DELPHI FILMPALAST (WORLD PREMIERE)
SUN. 23,	10:00 AM	@ CINEMAXX 11 (MARKET)
SAT. 22,	4:00 PM	@ CINEMAXX 6 (PRESS ONLY)
MON. 24,	7:30 PM	@ CINEMAXX 4
SAT. 29,	1.00 PM	@ ARSENAL 1
SUN. 1,	10.30 AM	@ CUBIX 5



SYNOPSIS

Romania, 1981.

Ceausescu is in office, leading a communist Romania. He writes the official story with the help of the National Television.

Mugur Călinescu, a 16 y.o. teenager, writes another story on walls with chalked uppercase protest messages against the regime. His actions are compiled in a voluminous file kept by the Secret Police [Securitate], which observed, apprehended, interrogated and destroyed him.

Linking both stories - secret and public - personal and collective - brings to light an unknown hero 30 years after the fall of communism.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN RADU JUDE & GIANINA CĂRBUNARIU

REASONS FOR MAKING THE UPPERCASE PRINT PLAY AND FILM.

Gianina: In 2011, I spent a few months going through files at the National Council for Studying the Securitate Archives (CNSAS) because I was interested in how each of them was built up, but also because I was trying to figure out what this “collective novel” with so many authors – Securitate officers and collaborators – would mean today. In 2011, there were about 20 kilometers of files in the CNSAS archive. When I returned, a few years later, the length had doubled. In 2011 I brought out the play X mm out of Y km, in which I used as scenic material ten pages from the file of writer and dissident Dorin Tudoran. I only learned of Mugur Călinescu’s case in 2012, from Marius Oprea’s book *Şase feluri de a muri* [Six Ways to Die]. I wanted to read the original file, so I contacted historians Mihail Bumbuş and Mihai Burcea, who gave me access to his two case folders, “The Panel” and “The Pupil”, and to recordings of their interviews in 2007 with some of the officers who handled the case in 1981. At first, I was mostly interested in the phenomenon of enrolling high school pupils as collaborators in the ’80s, because I had learned, from discussions with experts in Romania and abroad, that they were surprisingly numerous here, while in other Eastern European countries enrolling minors was more of an exception. I chose Mugur Călinescu’s case because his file had both references to the phenomenon of enrolling minors and mentions of an exception, which the file, written in a highly standardized language, had failed to completely obscure. Mugur’s story is that of a 16-year-old in a small town who, coming up against an oppressive mechanism that gradually cuts him off from friends and family, still manages to convey, even in his statements under interrogation (obviously constricted by standard

formulae), signs of free thinking at a time when people were afraid of their own thoughts. The file and the interviews with former Securitate officers are not mere “traces” of an episode in recent history; they challenge us to question the society we live in now – which was one of the goals of this play.

Radu: I saw the play sometime in 2012 and I remember talking to Şerban Pavlu (who had seen it too) about how a film inspired by the same case would never work – the only reason it worked on stage, claimed Pavlu, was that this kind of playwriting is unusual and... anyway, I can’t remember all his arguments, but we both thought a film based on the play would only add to the long list of anti-Communist films – which are necessary, but mostly either excessive, or bad, or both, despite their good intentions. In fact, I believe it’s precisely the good intentions of these films/plays that are debatable. At any rate, I kept thinking of the play and I suppose the decision to turn it into a film ties in with my increased interest for archives, developed after seeing the play. In retrospect, I find that what Gianina managed to do isn’t just a theatrical success, but also very close to how I myself am interested in using archive materials to build up some of my films – including some that are still in the project phase. Besides, being a cynic, I am incapable of constructing a positive character. Gianina is a humanist and does it constantly, her plays are full (among other things) of credible positive characters. I wanted one of my own and Gianina lent me one.

There is more. I’ve just about had enough of my own ideas and wanted to make a film that would be a genuine collaboration, to make a different start. If the film looks quite a bit different from what I’ve done so far, it is also due to this collaboration, this different starting point. The experience has been positive and I’ve repeated it by making an archive-material documentary with historian Adrian Cioflâncă (The Exit of the Trains). Also, among other things, I’m preparing an essay-film with Christian Ferencz-Flatz, a philosopher and film theorist.

REASONS FOR MAKING THE UPPERCASE PRINT PLAY AND FILM.

Gianina: I had already explored the construction mechanisms behind a Securitate file, so in the second play I made based on this kind of ready-made material I tried to follow the story as well. The rehearsals were quite different from the usual process of making a play. For one month I read and dis-



cussed the 200 pages of the file with the actors, while stage work took about three weeks. That was because I wanted all of us to have a common language. We were artists from different generations – some of us were born in the same year as Mugur Călinescu and had had direct contact with that reality (actress Cătălina Mustață), but there were others, such as myself or Gabriel Răuță, who were both 12 in 1989, or younger colleagues who were only a few years old at the time of the Revolution (Alexandru Potocean, Mihai Smarandache, Silviu Vîlcu). So our experiences were rather different. I made a selection of the material, picked a chronological order (because documents don't always follow a timeline in the file) and chose a dramaturgy based on restructuring the texts, imagining potential situations in which they were produced, but without adding a single word. We were not interested in a faithful “re-enactment” of the case or its period. This is a play that tries to push the limits of a document and of theatrical production at the same time: Is such a document a trustworthy “trace”? Can theatre recreate a reality starting from “traces” of it? After all, how does one read an archive? Who is the author of this type of “dramatic” text – those who gave the statements, those who requested them, those who transcribed recorded conversations, the Securitate as an oppressive system, we who “rewrite” it all with theatrical means?

Radu: I kept Gianina's ideas and questions for the filmed part, adding a few extras from the same file. The criterion for choosing the TV archive materials that break up the narration was chronological. In other words, I looked for footage broadcast by the National Television at the time when Mugur Călinescu's story was unfolding, only abdicating from this principle two or three times – because, in my work of visual archaeology in the National Television Archive (where materials are less than perfectly indexed), I happened upon things that were so good, so to the point, that I kept them. After all, they belong to the same period, they are already history – remaining traces.

ON THE CONCEPT OF THE PLAY/FILM.

Gianina: I attempted a performance exercise playing on the line between reality and fiction. That, I thought, was the great challenge, both artistically and ethically, not the reenactment of a “slice of life”. I made the “script” visible at all times through live video projections of the statements/

sketches from the file or even texts written by Mugur (the originals, taken from the file). At the same time, the play is a work of fiction from the point of view of how the material is treated on stage (props, projections, acting, lighting etc.) So whole scenes taken entirely from the file, such as those based on transcriptions of conversations in the house, were perceived by the public as fiction – because they had a dialogue, a conflict, they appeared to be “well-written” by a playwright. On the other hand, the scenes in which two Securitate offices were acting out “what was heard and seen in the house”, trying to lend a sort of rhythm and, perhaps, some ironic poetry to a highly standardized language – they were perceived as actual fragments from the file, though they were a collage of brief observations compiled from dozens of pages on file.

Radu: Gianina took a Securitate file, chose fragments from it and made a collage. By putting together the documents (and dramatizing them here and there) she created a story, a coherent narrative construction. Of course, this narration can be questioned in many aspects – and it has been done, I believe, or should be done by historians, theatre critics a.s.o.

What I decided to do beyond what Gianina did (or, rather, not beyond, but differently) was replacing the collage with montage. I use the word “montage” in the meaning S.M. Eisenstein gives it – more in his theoretical texts than in his films (most of them compiled in the volume *Towards a Theory of Montage*, as of yet not translated into Romanian, of course). Put briefly, the main idea is that joining two pictures through montage can generate a third, formed in the mind of the viewer, whose meaning results from the juxtaposition of the two pictures and is absent from either one of them, being born only through their joining. Eisenstein was, of course, referring to cinema, but the Golden Age of montage is right now: anyone who sees a meme on the internet actually sees, most times, a variant of Eisensteinian montage. (To pick a random example: the stupid meme in which a photo of Romanian President Iohannis is put next to a picture of Hitler, generating the idea that Iohannis is a Nazi. The idea is absent from either of the two pictures, and only appears when they are put together.) Anyone who scrolls through Facebook and pays attention can see a post or a picture of, say, a burning rain forest followed by a McDonald's ad and get an idea from mentally connecting the two posts/pictures. That was more or less what I tried to do – systematically breaking up Gianina's story (her collage)



and turning it into a work of montage, in which each picture collides with another and their joining generates new ideas for the public. Of course, meanings are not as easily found as in Internet memes; I would say this is essentially a poetic approach, if we take poetry as Malraux saw it: “All true poetry is no doubt irrational insofar as it substitutes a new system of relations for the ‘established’ relations between things.” I believe montage is not just a way of poetizing, but a very serious way (though it should be used with caution, as it can easily lead to fakes or propaganda of various sorts) of understanding and constructing history. Besides, this procedure has made the film highly accessible and entertaining, from my point of view: It doesn't just tell the story of Mugur Călinescu as pieced together by Gianina from his Securitate file, but offers hundreds of other small stories. Those who get bored with the first have every chance to like the second and so on.

Why the theatrical mise-en-scène of the film? Why a “filmed play”, in other words? Several people have already asked me that and I think nothing is more contemptuous among filmmakers than to call a film a “filmed play”. First of all, contrary to such opinions, I believe there is no such thing as “filmed plays” to begin with; there are plays and there are films. A filmed play becomes a film (and it is relevant and amusing that Jonas Mekas was awarded in Venice for his “documentary” when the film – *The Brig*, 1964 – consists of 16-mm footage of a play at the Living Theatre). Of course, we can only use the name “filmed plays” for the horrors produced by our televisions under the name of “television plays” or for actual recordings of plays (even on foreign TV channels). I've never understood why theatre directors or actors accept to have their plays recorded so badly, with no attention to their rhythm, the acting and, most of all, the mise-en-scène, which is systematically massacred by cameramen and television directors more used to filming political talk-shows, at best. I'd love to do television plays – maybe some of that desire found its expression in this. Besides, the possibilities of film as a medium are so ample, and this is only an attempt to explore a few of them; this combination – a “play-document-televised-cinema” – is successful, I believe. And one more thing: I am proud to say that the film is even more theatrical than Gianina's play, or that her play is more cinematic than the film, in fact.



TEAMWORK AND MANAGING THE BUDGET FOR THE PLAY/FILM.

Gianina: Our producers were the dramAcum Association and the Nitra International Festival in Slovakia, as part of a project called Parallel Lives – 20th Century through the Eyes of Secret Police, in partnership with Odeon Theatre in Bucharest. The international project invited guest artists and experts from all six partner countries. We all worked with archives from former political police bodies. The budget was fair for a play in a studio-size space, and included bringing it to the participating European theatres (in Germany, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia). The artistic team was formed gradually during this work process which required greater involvement than if we had started from a written script. Besides, the fact that the “characters” and “situations” were actual persons and destinies created a special sort of pressure, a kind of artistic responsibility. It is one thing to do (yet another) unsuccessful Shakespeare; it is completely different to aesthetically “bury” a real fact in a pointless play. I believe this is what we were all afraid of. The artistic team formed close ties over the six years of touring and

shows at Odeon Theatre. We still discover nuances and connections to what happens today when we meet for rehearsals before another show.

Radu: I got funding through the Romanian Film Centre call schemes and wanted to make the film quickly, without waiting for extra funding for years. So I had to plan everything to fit a rather small budget. We only had six days of filming – a performance I am proud of, but not one I hope to repeat. In this I was supported by the whole production team – particularly Ada Solomon, Carla Fotea and Cristina Iliescu, the film’s assistant director. Marius Panduru is by far Romania’s fastest director of photography (on top of being immensely talented), and Irina Moscu’s sets were designed for efficient filming. I am glad Irina accepted to work on this film, I admired her for her sets in Radu Afrim or Alexandru Dabija’s plays. It was a very pleasant encounter. All the actors were excellent and diligent, but I’d like to particularly mention Șerban Lazarovici, the teenager who played Mugur Călinescu. The fact

that he was rejected from the acting entrance exam at the Romanian Theatre and Cinema Arts University is, I think, further proof of his genuine talent.

OPINION ON EACH OTHER’S WORK.

Gianina: I think the film asks some extra questions, sprung from using a different language, different instruments of artistic exploration specific of cinema in general and Radu Jude as a director in particular. This is not a film about “a story”; it “blows up” the story by using archive materials more diverse than the ones in the play. The selection and use of visual references from the National Television archive, along with micro-scenes from the file and statements of former Securitate officers, generates multiple layers of meaning and brings up questions about the seen and unseen parts of society, about the ambiguity of any archive, about the feelings of nostalgia and anti-nostalgia we sometimes experience simultaneously. By its very nature, a play disappears with time, but a film “remains” and has a chance to speak to a wider, multi-generation audience, which I find to be a more profound, more durable act of retrieval of a gesture that might otherwise have remained anonymous.

Radu: I admire Gianina Cărbunariu not only for the subjects she picks, but also for her mise-en-scène – which is what I often find limited in a number of political plays. I can understand that as a valid option, I can understand the desire to focus on the message, but I can’t help it, I’m the kind of spectator who cares about the form as well, and Gianina usually comes up with formal proposals that I find highly interesting. There is a moment in Uppercase Print that I wanted to replicate in the film, but it wouldn’t have been as powerful and amusing as it is in the play: the one in which the characters, all of them teachers participating in the meeting to destroy Mugur Călinescu, humbly get on their knees to speak their opinion into a microphone placed on the floor. It is a purely theatrical moment, and it’s such moments that make the whole play worth seeing.





HISTORICAL FACT ON MUGUR CĂLINESCU

On the 29th of September, 1981, the message “We are sick of waiting in endless queues” was found written with blue chalk in uppercase letters on the walls of the County Committee of the Romanian Communist Party in the city of Botoșani.

In the following days, many more such messages were to be found around Botoșani: “WE WANT FOOD AND FREEDOM!”, “WE ARE TIRED OF MISERY!”, “WE WANT JUSTICE, WE WANT FREEDOM”, “CITIZENS! OUR COUNTRY HAS A DIFFICULT ECONOMICAL SITUATION.”.

The Securitate [the secret service] immediately started an investigation into these actions which were unimaginable during the communist regime. The case was officially named “The Fence” and the Miliția and Securitate officers suspected these messages to be the actions of foreign agents or organizations.

It was only on the 18th of October, after many attempts of finding the one responsible, that an agent of the Securitate catches “the terrorist” in action.

To everyone’s surprise, he was no foreign agent, nor an old-time dissident, but a 17-year-old high school student who could no longer stand the dreadful life. His name was Mugur Călinescu.

Mugur Călinescu and his mother were interrogated for days.

He was soon released, but he was accused of being an enemy of the people, was being kept under close surveillance by the Securitate and was called for further interrogations constantly [sometimes even being held for more than 24 hours at a time].

Even though he was an exemplary student, after these events, Mugur started to be ostracized at school and his mother lost her job. When Mugur unexpectedly failed his university entry exams, a professor told that after what he did, he had no chance of ever getting into university.

In 1985, Mugur is suddenly diagnosed with leukemia, cirrhosis and obstructive jaundice, even though he previously showed no signs of illness. He dies very soon after, in a hospital. Those close to him claim that Mugur was poisoned and irradiated during the interrogations.

BIOGRAPHY RADU JUDE



Radu Jude is a Romanian director and screenwriter. He studied filmmaking in Bucharest and started his career as an assistant director. In 2006, he made the short film “The Tube with a Hat”, winner of more than 50 international awards. Jude's feature debut “The Happiest Girl in the World” (2009) was selected for more than 50 international film festivals. Titles such as “Aferim!”, “Scarred Hearts” and “Everybody in Our Family” followed and won multiple awards: Silver Bear for Best Director in Berlinale 2015, Special Jury Prize in Locarno 2016 and an EFA nomination for Best Scriptwriter. The international premiere of “The Dead Nation” in Locarno 2017 marked his debut in documentary film.

His latest feature “I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians” (2018) won the Crystal Globe for Best Film and Label Europa Cinema Prize in Karlovy Vary.



BIOGRAPHY GIANINA CĂRBUNARIU

Gianina Cărbunariu is a Romanian playwright and director. Her fictional performances, inspired from research of different archives and interviews, were produced by independent companies (dramAcum, Piese Refractare), but also by state theatres in Romania (National Theatre in Sibiu, Odeon Theatre in Bucharest) and abroad (CDN in Madrid, ERT in Modena, Kammerspiele in Munich). Her work was presented in international festivals (New Plays from Europe Biennale in Wiesbaden, Wiener Festwochen, Dialog Festival in Wroclaw, TransAmeriques Montreal etc). In 2014 and 2016 she was invited in the official selection of Avignon Festival. Her plays have been translated and produced by Royal Court London, Schaubühne Berlin, Royal Dramatic Stockholm, Volkstheater Vienna etc. In 2014 “For Sale” got the UNITER Prize for Best Performance.



Ada Solomon is a Romanian producer and the founder and managing director of Hi Film and microFILM. She has been working in the film business for over 25 years.

She has been collaborating for both feature & documentaries with the main figures of the Romanian New Cinema such as Cristian Nemescu, Radu Jude, Razvan Radulescu, Adrian Sitaru, Constantin Popescu, Alexandru Solomon and has produced short films and debut features of emerging filmmakers such as Paul Negoescu, Cristian Iftime, Daniel Sandu, Ivana Mladenovic, Sebastian Mihailescu, Stefan Constantinescu, Valentin Hotea, Adriano Valerio, Federico Bondi, Martha Berman, Chiara Malta.

She was involved in films presented and awarded in the most prestigious festivals such as Cannes, Berlin, Venice and Sundance, such as “Child’s Pose” [Calin Peter Netzer, 2013], which won the Golden Bear in Berlin, “Aferim!” [Radu Jude, 2015], which won the Silver Bear or Maren Ade’s European Academy Awards multiple winner & Oscar nominated “Toni Erdmann”. Ada Solomon has co-produced with numerous European countries and has released her films in over 50 territories.

Ada Solomon is the Executive President of the European Women’s Audio-visual Network, the Romanian National Coordinator of EAVE, graduate and Board member of ACE, as well as Deputy Chairperson of the European Film Academy.

She was awarded with the European Co-production Award – Prix Eurimages at the 2013 European Film Awards and with the Central European Initiative Award at the Trieste Film Festival in 2018.



CAST

Securitate Officer – Bogdan Zamfir

Mugur Călinescu – Șerban Lazarovici

The Mother – Ioana Iacob

The Father – Șerban Pavlu

CREW

Director: RADU JUDE

Screenplay: Radu Jude and Gianina Cărbunariu, adapted after the theater play Tipografic Majuscul by Gianina Cărbunariu

Director of photography: Marius Panduru

Editor: Cătălin Cristuțiu

Production designer: Irina Moscu

Costume designer: Dorin Negrău

Sound on set: Jean Umansky

Sound designer: Dana Bunescu

Make up artist: Bianca Boeroiu

Hair stylist: Domnica Bodogan

Producer: Ada Solomon

Production Company: microFILM

Countries of production: Romania

In co-production with: Romanian Public Television, Hi Film Productions

With the support of The National Film Center Romania, Creative Europe – Media Programme

Financial partners: Dr. Oetker, Covalact

Internatioanl Sales: Best Friend Forever

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