




# THE WHITE FORTRESS

(TABIJA)

AN IGOR DRLJACA FILM

A cinematic photograph of two young men in profile, looking out over a body of water at sunset. The man on the left is in the foreground, wearing a patterned shirt. The man on the right is slightly behind him, wearing a striped shirt. The background is a soft, golden glow from the setting sun over a distant shoreline.

A TIMELAPSE PICTURES | SCCA/pro.ba production

In association with GEARSHIFT FILMS produced with the participation of TELEFILM CANADA  
and EURIMAGES, ONTARIO CREATES, KANTON SARAJEVO, CREATIVE EUROPE PROGRAMME – MEDIA OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,  
FONDACIJA ZA KINEMRAFIJU SARAJEVO

**"THE WHITE FORTRESS" / "TABIJA"**

Starring PAVLE ČEMERKIĆ, SUMEJA DARDAGAN, JASMIN GELJO, KERIM ČUTUNA, ALBAN UKAJ, IRENA MULAMUHIĆ  
Casting by TIMKA GRIN    Costume Designer INA ARNAUTALIĆ    Production Designer SANDA POPOVAC  
Director of Photography EROL ZUBČEVIĆ    Original Music CASEY MQ    Edited by AJLA ODOBAŠIĆ  
Produced by ALBERT SHIN, IGOR DRLJAČA, BORGA DORTER, JORDAN BARKER, ADIS ĐAPO, AMRA BAKŠIĆ ČAMO  
Written and Directed by IGOR DRLJAČA

## SYNOPSIS

In a rundown Sarajevo suburb, Faruk is an orphan who lives with his ill grandmother and spends his days foraging for scrap metal and dabbling in petty crime. One day he meets Mona, a timid teen from a politically powerful and affluent family. As Mona dreams of escaping the overbearing toxicity of her home life, she seeks refuge and opens herself up to Faruk, a boy from a world entirely different than her own.





## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

*In The White Fortress (TABIIJA), I wanted to make a coming-of-age romance that adopts the trappings of a fairy tale while functioning as a mystery thriller.*

*While the film focuses on its young protagonist Faruk, and the girl he falls in love with Mona, the film is also about today's post-war Sarajevo. I have a deep love for Sarajevo, where I was born and where I spent half of my childhood before immigrating to Canada during the civil war in the 1990s. I often struggle to make sense of what the city is becoming.*

*Remnants of Communist-era cronyism have combined with an unregulated capitalism to uplift a new political class that holds all social and economic levers of power. The oppressiveness of this system coupled with lack of opportunity benefits the few and robs young people of the ability to create meaning and plan for their futures. It is a city I simultaneously recognize and in which I feel like a stranger. There was a time when almost anything felt possible in this city: it was a place of opportunity, of dreams, naïve romance, and a proud sense of multiculturalism. But those days are gone. Massive youth unemployment has contributed to an exodus of people from the city and the country.*

*In this environment, to fall in love freely is a liability. Certain classes and groups simply do not mix. Faruk and Mona are never meant to meet. Faruk was orphaned when his mother, a talented pianist, passed away. He was raised by his grandmother, and living on her meager pension, he was not afforded many opportunities, apart from helping his uncle's iron picking business. Mona, conversely, is a child of Bosnia's new affluent political class. But while the reality of their class difference is stark, it is not an obstacle to either, until others became aware of their relationship. Both feel equally lost in a city where both the rich and the poor lack opportunities and the protection of a functional state. Some of those who cannot leave turn to a life of crime, nihilism, and violence. Both Faruk and Mona are captives of this new Sarajevo dynamic, and both lack agency to change their situation.*

*Sometimes all one can do to move forward is to say goodbye, and this film is their farewell letter to Sarajevo.*

*—Igor Drljaca*



## A CITY DIVIDED

The immediate post-war period of the mid 1990's was characterized by a sense of hope that things could be restored to Sarajevo's pre-war days, but the city and what it stands for today are just a mirage. Even as new buildings adorn its skyline, the soul of the city, its spirit of progress and tolerance, are seldomly there. Sarajevo's promise is a mere political talking point that has no real meaning. Behind Sarajevo's walls are stories of prejudice, corruption, abandoned children, and social decay. Faruk's arc shows this in action, of how decisions get made in this type of environment and why.



## IGOR DRljACA — DIRECTOR BIO

He runs the production company Timelapse Pictures with filmmaker Albert Shin, and is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Theatre and Film at the University of British Columbia.

His award-winning short films include *Woman in Purple* (2010) and *The Fuse: or How I Burned Simon Bolivar* (2011), and *The Archivists* (2020). His critically-acclaimed debut feature *Krivina* (2012) premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival, and had its international premiere at Rotterdam. He co-produced Albert Shin's *In Her Place* (2014).

His sophomore feature *The Waiting Room* (2015) premiered at the Locarno International Film Festival, and had its North American premiere at TIFF. His first feature documentary *The Stone Speakers* (2018) had its world premiere at TIFF, and international premiere at Berlinale.

*The White Fortress* (*Tabija*, 2021), his third narrative feature, is a co-production between Canada and Bosnia-Herzegovina. It will have its world premiere at the 71st Berlinale as part of the Generation 14Plus competition.





## **PRODUCTION COMPANY BIOS**

### **TIMELAPSE PICTURES**

Timelapse Pictures is a production company based in Toronto, Canada, founded by filmmakers Igor Drljaca and Albert Shin. Their films, including *In Her Place*, *The Waiting Room* and *The Stone Speakers* have won numerous awards and played festivals worldwide including TIFF, Berlinale, Locarno, Telluride, SXSW, among others, helping the company become a leader in artist-oriented productions in Canada. *The White Fortress (Tabija)* a co-production between Canada/Bosnia and Herzegovina premiering at the Berlinale is their latest project.

### **SCCA/pro.ba**

SCCA/pro.ba is a film, TV, and video production company established in 1998. Their films have participated and won awards in festivals around the globe including Berlinale, Venice Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival, Rotterdam Film Festival, Locarno Film Festival, IDFA, Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival and Sarajevo Film Festival. While their main focus is development and production of original content from Bosnian-Herzegovinian directors, they also regularly participate in regional and international co-productions.



**Press Contact:**

STEPHEN LAN

German and International Press

Lan.Stephen@sympatico.ca

iamStephenLan@gmail.com

+1 416-923-6327

**Sales & Festivals:**

TVCO

Simonetta Polese - Head of Sales - [simonetta@tvco.eu](mailto:simonetta@tvco.eu)

Billy Montacchini - Festival Manager - [billy@tvco.eu](mailto:billy@tvco.eu)



TIMELAPSEPICTURES

