

# MARI

# J A

a film by

**MICHAEL KOCH**

with

**MARGARITA BREITKREIZ  
GEORG FRIEDRICH  
OLGA DINNIKOVA  
SAHIN ERYILMAZ**

**PRESS DOSSIER**



Festival del film Locarno  
Concorso internazionale

# FILM

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length	<b>100 MIN</b>
picture format	<b>DCP, 2K, FARBE, 24FPS, 1:1,85</b>
sound format	<b>5.1. (6 CHANNELS)</b>
languages	<b>GERMAN WITH PARTS IN RUSSIAN, GERMAN SUBS</b>
subtitles	<b>ENGLISH &amp; FRENCH SUBTITLES AVAILABLE</b>

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**LOGLINE** Marija, a young Ukrainian woman, cleans hotel rooms in Dortmund (Germany) but dreams of owning her own hair salon. Determined to achieve that goal, she is willing to compromise her body, her social relationships and even her own feelings in the process.

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**SYNOPSIS** Marija, a young Ukrainian woman, earns her living as a hotel maid in Dortmund (Germany), but dreams of owning her own hair salon. She puts money aside each month but when she is fired without notice, her dream seems out of reach. Without work and under financial pressure, she finds herself forced to look for other opportunities. In her determination to reach her goal she sacrifices her body, her social relationships and her own feelings.

Michael Koch's feature film debut is the portrait of a young woman who lives on the periphery of our production- and consumer-oriented society, but does not accept the ascribed role of the victim. Demanding, determined and uncompromising, she fights to live a freer, self-determined life.

# INTERVIEW

with

**MICHAEL KOCH**  
**DIRECTOR & SCREENWRITER**

What inspired the story of MARIJA? In 2010 I was in Ukraine for a longer period of time and met a lot of people, mostly young people, who wanted to leave the country at all cost. Their determination to find a way out of a life without perspective was striking. Through a friend in Kiev I heard about a young woman who came to Germany from Odessa. She worked in Dortmund as a cleaning woman, but aspired to open her own nail salon as soon as possible. The urgency with which the young woman fought for her independence and the pride with which she responded to setbacks really impressed me and made me want to examine the subject more closely.

MARIJA takes place in the Nordstadt district of Dortmund. Can you tell us something about the neighborhood you shot in? Dortmund Nordstadt is a former blue-collar neighborhood in the Ruhr region where today people from over 130 nations live together. It's a microcosm which says a lot about the way things are today and depicts one of the realities of German life. Due to the decline of the steel- and coal industries, many houses in the Nordstadt are empty and have fallen into disrepair. This attracts many migrants who come here with little or no financial means and believe they can build a new life. The landlords, on the other hand, see the new migrant laborers as a welcome clientele, because they can rent out overcrowded floors and rooms and still make money with their ramshackle buildings. The struggle for means of existence is evident everywhere in Dortmund's Nordstadt. This neighborhood seemed to be the best place to explore the effects that the daily struggle for survival has on the immigrants' own social environment. In other words: In a world where interpersonal relationships are focused on economic viability, can we still afford things like ethics or feelings?

How would you describe Marija? Marija is a willful, strong woman who has to take a lot, but can also dish it out. I was interested in this aspect from the beginning. I wanted to tell the story of a woman who doesn't accept her ascribed role of victim. A woman whose abrasiveness toward herself and her environment can be disconcerting, yet she never loses her pride or her power of persuasion. A woman always on the go and looking ahead. She pursues her goal with such uncompromising commitment, that she becomes unsure how to deal with her emerging need for closeness and security. She even decides against her feelings, knowing full well it's her only choice if she wants to take the important step toward a freer, self-determined life.

What was important to you in the casting process, what did you look for? I have seen Margarita Breitzkreuz on stage several times (at the Volksbühne Berlin) – but never in a movie. When she came to the audition, I knew right away that she would be our Marija. She is an incorruptible, headstrong and very authentic actress. As for Georg Friedrich (Georg), I already had him in mind during the writing process. He has this ability to bring a certain vulnerability to his very strong and proud characters that just touches me. I am always more interested in the person than in the character, which is probably why I have casted actors who all have something utterly unconventional and individual. A genuine uniqueness that emanates from their bodies and faces. That's why many roles were played by people who had never been in front of a camera before. I wanted to assume or stipulate as little as possible, so I worked with people who knew from their very own lives what the movie is talking about, who have made the same experiences or are even living this life.

How was the shoot? Your film was mostly shot on location. During the extensive research phase, I spent a lot of time in cafés and on the streets. This helped to dispel the initial mistrust people had. After a while they began to tell me their stories. I incorporated these stories into the screenplay early on and many of the people I met ended up in the film. This enabled us to almost always film at the same location where the story actually took place. Involving the local people and the resulting mutual trust made it a very rewarding experience.

# CAST

Marija

## MARGARITA BREITKREIZ

Margarita Breitzkreiz was born 1980 in Omsk (Russia). After the German reunification, she moved with her parents to Germany and now lives in Berlin. From 2002 to 2006 she attended the prestigious Academy of Dramatic Arts "Ernst Busch" in Berlin.

While studying the born Russian has appeared already in several theatre plays, e.g. in *Podpolje* directed by Martin Wuttke and Paul Plamper. Since 2006 Margarita Breitzkreiz performs regularly at the Volksbühne Berlin, among others in the major and international shown theatre productions by Frank Castorf (*The Idiot*, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, *To Moscow*, *Soldiers*, *The Player*, *Broken*, *The Brothers Karamazov*). In the German film and television scene she is still an exception even though she has already appeared in a number of films. Such as in *Absurdistan* by Veit Helmer and *Polizeiruf 110: Fever* by Hendrik Handloegten. For her leading role in the television production *The Guard And The Girl* by Hartmut Schoen, she received the European Civis Television Award.

Georg

## GEORG FRIEDRICH

Since 2001, Vienna-born actor Georg Friedrich has been one of the most successful actors in Austrian and German arthouse cinema. He became known through his portrayal in films by Ulrich Seidl, Michael Haneke and Wolfgang Murnberger. In recent years he played the lead roles in *Über uns das All (Above Us Only Sky)* by Jan Schomburg, *Aloys* by Tobias Nölle and *Wild* by Nicolette Krebitz.

Olga

## OLGA DINNIKOVA

After finishing her studies at the European Film Actor School of Zurich, Olga Dinnikova is currently completing her Master of Arts in Film at the Zurich University of the Arts. As an actress she was last seen in *Nightfall* by Simon Aeby.

Cem

## SAHIN ERYILMAZ

Sahin Eryilmaz, an actor from Cologne, made a name for himself through his performances in films like *Der Medicus (The Physician)* by Philipp Stölzl, *Frau Ella* by Markus Goller and the new Hamburg *Tatort (Crime Scene)*. He currently plays the lead adult role in the popular VOX TV series *Der Club der roten Bänder (The Red Band Society)*.

supporting cast

Amina	ELENA PREDUEO
Ercan	NIKOLAY DONTCHEV
Igor	DMITRI ALEXANDROV
Architect	GEORGES DEVDARIANI
Building contractor	MARK ZAK
Landlord	MARKUS JOHN
Marek	DIMITRI BILOV
Marek's boy	LEONARD NAPLOCHA
Singer	GABRIEL VILCIU
Personnel manager	MONIKA BUJINSKI
Doctor	ANDREAS ENGELMANN
Hairdresser	FABIENNE HESSE
Customer	GÜNFER CÖLGECE
André	STEFAN GEBELHOFF
Cleaning lady	TANASE LUCIA-VERGINICA
Family man	LINCAN GELU
Romanian	PAUN VASILE
Mehmet	IBRAHIM EFE
Mehmet's buddy	KAYA KÖKSAL
Hairdresser	ROLF M. WENNIG
Security guard	SEBASTIAN FRITZSCH
Hasan	METIN EROL
Prospective tenant	SERIF KAYA
Construction worker	ROBERT BALTA
Delivery man	KARL THOMAS

# TEAM

writer & director

## MICHAEL KOCH

Born 1982 in Lucerne (Switzerland), Michael Koch studied from 2003–2008 at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne and also worked as an actor. During this time he made the following short films: *We Are The Faithful* (2005), *Poolside* (2006) and *Polar* (2008). All three films were very successful at international festivals and won numerous awards. *Polar* received a Special Mention at the 2009 Berlin International Film Festival and the German Camera Award as well as the German Short Film Award 2009. After his studies he worked as a director for the theater Kaserne Basel. Michael Koch celebrates the world premiere of his feature film debut *Marija* in International Competition at the Locarno Film Festival.

director	MICHAEL KOCH
producers Pandora Film	CLAUDIA STEFFEN CHRISTOPH FRIEDEL
co-producer Hugofilm	CHRISTOF NERACHER
co-producer Little Shark	TOM SPIESS
commissioning editor WDR	ANDREA HANKE
commissioning editor ARTE	GEORG STEINERT
commissioning editor SRF	TAMARA MATTLE
script writer	MICHAEL KOCH
co-writer	JULIANE GROSSHEIM
director of photography	BERNHARD KELLER
editor	FLORIAN RIEGEL
production designer	PETRA BARCHI
make-up & hair	ASTRID WEBER
costumes	PERI DE BRAGANCA
sound designers	TOBIAS KOCH MAURIZIUS STAERKLE DRUX
original sound recordist	JEAN-PIERRE GERTH
gaffer	HENRY NOTROFF
production manager	KATJA CHRISTOCHOWITZ
1st assistant director	ROGER SCHWEIZER
casting	SUSANNE RITTER

Filmografie Michael Koch

Festivals/Awards

## MARIJA

100 min. / feature film / 2016

– International Competition Locarno Film Festival

## WIR SIND DIR TREU (WE ARE THE FAITHFUL)

9 min. / documentary / 2005

– Best Swiss Film / Winterthur Intl. Short Film Festival 2005  
– Le prix Canal+ / Festival international du court métrage de Clermont-Ferrand 2006  
– Audience Award / Documenta Madrid 2006  
– Silver Impakt Award / Impakt 2006  
– Best Documentary Film & ARTE Short Film Prize / Munich Intl. Festival of Film Schools 2006

## BECKENRAND

19 min. / short film / 2006

– Premiere, Locarno Intl. Film Festival 2006  
– Nomination Swiss Film Prize 2007  
– Prix spécial du jury / Festival du film court de Lille 2007  
– Special Mention / Hamburg Intl. Short Film Festival 2007  
– Nomination German Short Film Award 2007

## POLAR

29 min. / short film / 2008

– Premiere and Special Mention / 59. Berlin Intl. Film Festival, Perspektive Deutsches Kino  
– Best Swiss Film / Winterthur Intl. Short Film Festival 2008  
– Golden Horseman / Best German Film, Filmfest Dresden  
– German Camera Award 2009 / Category Short Film  
– Nomination FIRST STEPS 2009 / Category Best Feature Film and Best Screenplay  
– Nomination Babelsberger Media Prize 2009 / Category Best Graduation Film – Feature Film  
– Certificate “Especially Valuable” / Filmbewertungsstelle Wiesbaden 2009  
– German Short Film Award Winner 2009 / Category Best Feature Film 7–30 min.

# PRODUCTION

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production company

**PANDORA FILM**

producers

**CLAUDIA STEFFEN AND  
CHRISTOPH FRIEDEL**

Pandora Film was founded in 1981 and has since established itself as one of the most prominent distributors of ambitious international art house cinema in Germany. In 1997 Pandora Film Produktion was founded as production division based in Cologne. The courage to also produce unusual film projects has been rewarded during the last 30 years with numerous awards from all major film festivals, national and international film prizes. Today Pandora Film Produktion presents itself as an independent production company with a catalogue of over 100 films.

[www.pandorafilm.com](http://www.pandorafilm.com)

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coproduction company

**HUGOFILM**

co-producer

**CHRISTOF NERACHER**

Zurich-based Hugofilm was founded 1999 by a community of filmmakers and visual artists. Since *Vitus*, Switzerland's most internationally successful film of the last decades (shortlist 79th Academy Awards, theatrical release in about 40 countries), Hugofilm is one of the most vital production companies in Switzerland. Currently two debut films are garnering attention: *Aloys* by Tobias Nölle (Berlin International Film Festival 2016, Panorama Section / FIPRESCI Prize Winner) and *Chrieg (War)* by Simon Jaquemet (Five nominations for the Swiss Film Prize and Winner of the Max Ophüls Prize).

[www.hugofilm.ch](http://www.hugofilm.ch)

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coproduction company

**LITTLE SHARK**

co-producer

**TOM SPIESS**

Little Shark Entertainment GmbH established itself as a Cologne-based independent production company for ambitious and successful cinema with films such as *Lammbock* and *Das Wunder von Bern (The Miracle Of Bern)* and the documentary *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen*. Since 1998 producer Tom Spiess and director Sönke Wortmann have received numerous distinctions and film awards, most recently for *Frau Müller Muss Weg!*.

[www.littleshark.de](http://www.littleshark.de)

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# MARIJA

a film by **MICHAEL KOCH**

produktion **PANDORA FILM PRODUKTION**

in co-production with **HUGOFILM**  
**LITTLE SHARK ENTERTAINMENT**

and **WESTDEUTSCHER RUNDFUNK**  
**ARTE**  
**SCHWEIZER RADIO UND FERNSEHEN/SRG SSR**

produktion supported by **FILM- UND MEDIENSTIFTUNG NRW**

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**BUNDESAMT FÜR KULTUR (EDI) SCHWEIZ**

**ZÜRCHER FILMSTIFTUNG**  
**BEAUFTRAGTE DER BUNDESREGIERUNG FÜR KULTUR UND MEDIEN FILMFÖRDERUNGSANSTALT**

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**FACHAUSSCHUSS AUDIOVISION UND MULTIMEDIA BS/BL**

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distributor germany **REAL FICTION FILMVERLEIH**

distributor switzerland **FRENETIC FILMS**

Press material and stills can be downloaded from:

[marija.pandorafilm.com](http://marija.pandorafilm.com)

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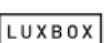
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MARGARITA BREITKREIZ



SAHIN ERYILMAZ, GEORG FRIEDRICH





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MARGARITA BREITKREIZ



GEORG FRIEDRICH, MARGARITA BREITKREIZ