

# **EYOLF**

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### **1. Film Synopsis**

Alfred and Rita live as a married couple together with their disabled child, Eyolf. The boy's handicap is the result of a fall in babyhood, when he was left unattended by his parents. After this accident Alfred has withdrawn from Rita and buried himself in his treatise on "human responsibility", which he considers the great work of his life. Coming back from a trip to the mountains, he decides to give up his book and devote himself entirely to Eyolf's happiness and progress. Rita feels rejected by her husband, and this results in outbursts of violent jealousy of both her son and Alfred's stepsister Asta, to whom Alfred is strongly attached. She reaches the point where she even wishes that Eyolf had never been born, as he diverts Alfred's attention from herself. Eyolf's accidental drowning uncovers secrets of the past and triggers off the suppressed guilt, mutual accusations and confrontation among the three who are left behind. Alfred and a conscience-stricken Rita beg Asta to stay with them and help them, but Asta escapes far away. Rita shares her plan to stay and devote herself to improving the lives of the poor children who live down by the sea. In this, Alfred sees something positive again, and he decides to remain next to her, so that together they can atone for their mistakes and, out of their feelings of guilt, their sorrow and the void left by the loss of Eyolf, find a road to absolution.

### **2. Director's Notes**

The story of the film is a free adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's play "Little Eyolf". Being familiar as a stage director with the work, I got fascinated by the way our minds work when we suffer the torture of guilt, especially when the pylons of illusions that offer emotional support have completely collapsed. In order to escape, or just survive, we often bend the boundaries of time and space. The film follows the subjective journey of Rita. It can be viewed both, either as a linear unfolding of the story, or a succession of glimpses in past events, colored by the pain of loss and the remorse of the present. In order to preserve the internal pacing of time, sequence shots are mainly used. The dark, empty space that surrounds Rita is her own creation, an insulated, sterilized world, or a desire to block the agony of reality, recede to the depths and cling to pieces of memory. Sound whispers and slashes of harsh light penetrate the membrane of her cocoon, underline intrusions of the outside world or the past, and test the fragility of her sanctuary. The few objects are fragments of her world: a couch, an old projector, a suitcase, an empty chair, a bench. Her grand evening dress marks her vain effort to hold fast on that part of her identity she so cherished, the riches and beauty. Eyolf's presence permeates everything but it is kept indirect, filtered. A piece of cloth, upon which Rita projects his images, becomes the anchoring point between past and present, harmonizes with her emotions, acquires greater dimensions and, with the reliving of Eyolf's drowning as a catalyst, shatters the dark space and transforms,- first to a fragmented screen and then to several floating torn pieces-, to the backdrop of the unfolding drama.

Focusing on the triangular relationship among Rita, Alfred and Asta, the film outlines a rending portrait of a family faced with the demolition of all illusions. It explores the lines that separate duty and guilt, punishment and mercy, the nature of possessive, obsessive love and the outcome of a blind commitment to a holy cause. The collapse of the lies and assumptions that support their entire world lead the characters to the realization that salvation lies in the abandonment of dreams and the embrace of penance. Only then a path might open to redemption and atonement.

### **3. Production Notes**

“Eyolf” was developed and produced by the Film and Theater production company “X-Act Art”. The company was founded in 2011 in Greece by Korina Chrisaidou and George Haratzas. Its theatrical productions include “Female Gender” which was based on two A.Strindberg's texts (“Motherly Love” and “The Stronger”), “Little Eyolf” by H. Ibsen, the “Creditors” by A.Strindberg and “The Lover” by H.Pinter. In its work X-Act Art is committed to using David Mamet's acting technique “Practical Aesthetics” as a method of acting.

The project attracted the attention of Michael Cacoyannis Foundation and the Norwegian Institute of Athens. They both supported “Eyolf” during development and production.

The movie was shot exclusively in Greece. Its main part was filmed in the stages of Michael Cacoyannis Foundation in Athens.

### **4. Biographies of the director and lead actors**

**Spiros Diamantis** was born and grew up in Greece. He got the degree of Master of Arts from the School of Cinematic Arts of the University of Southern California at Los Angeles. He has directed several short films in various formats. His half hour thesis film "The Arches Beyond" was screened in the official selection of short films in Venice Film festival and other international festivals. He has won a state award in Thessaloniki Film Festival and the prize of the best emerging director in Drama Short Film Festival. During the last ten years he lives in Greece where he has directed several plays on stage, both classical and contemporary. “Eyolf” (2017) is his first feature film.

**George Haratzas** was born in Athens, Greece. He studied acting in Athens and theatre directing in London (Master in Theatre Practices) at Rose Bruford College. He specialized in acting in New York, studying ”Practical Aesthetics” at the Atlantic Theatre Company, David Mamet's and W.H.Macy's company. He is a founding member of X-Act Art theatre and cinema company. He has presented work in England, Greece, Spain and the USA. As a director he has directed and co-directed “The Lover” by H.Pinter, “Creditors” by A.Strindberg, “Little Eyolf” by H.Ibsen and “Female Gender” which was based on A. Strindberg texts, all with X-Act Art company. As an actor he recently played the leading roles in “The Lover”, “Creditors”, “Little Eyolf”. He played the leading role in the full length film “Eyolf” (director Spiros Diamantis) . In his career he has collaborated with many more directors such as Peadar Kirk, Leonidas Loizidis, Chris Baldwin, Nellie Karra, Colin Elwood, George Agathonikiadis, Thomas Moschopoulos, Froso Mastrokallou, Elena Filippova. Since 2007 he has taught and given lectures on acting and “Practical Aesthetics” at many schools and institutions such as the Michael

Cacoyiannis Foundation, the Theatre of Changes, Drama School 'Arhi', Drama School Andreas Voutsinas in Thessaloniki, the department of Theatre Studies of the University of Patras, the cultural centre Notos in Chania and other organizations of theatre education.

**Korina Chrisaidou** was born in Greece. She studied acting in Athens and was trained at a master level in Practical Aesthetics in New York at the Atlantic Theatre Company Acting School. She is a founding member of X-ACT ART Theatre and Cinema Company. As an actress, she has presented work in Greece, Egypt, USA and UK. In theatre, she has participated in numerous productions playing leading roles such as Rita in Ibsen's "Little Eyolf", Thekla in Strinberg's "Creditors", Sarah in Pinter's "The Lover", Beatrice-Joanna in Middleton's "The Changeling", etc. In cinema, she has played the leading roles of Rita in the full length film "Eyolf" and in the short length film "Persi tetoio kairo". In Television, she has collaborated with Kostas Kostopoulos and Yiannis Vasiliadis. She has also worked as a co-director in the "The Lover" by H.Pinter, "Creditors" by A.Strindberg, "Little Eyolf" by H.Ibsen. As an assistant director she has worked with Nellie Karra and Maria Savva. Since 2007 she has taught and given lectures on acting and the Practical Aesthetics at the Michael Cacoyiannis Foundation, the Theatre of Changes, Drama School 'Arhi', Drama School Andreas Voutsinas in Thessaloniki, the department of Theatre Studies of the University of Patras, the cultural centre Notos in Chania and other organizations of theatre education.