



“SUBLIMELY SHOT”

*The Guardian*



A film by Laura Samani

# PICCOLO CORPO



NEFERTITI FILM and RAI CINEMA with TOMSA FILMS and VERTIGO present "SMALL BODY"/"PICCOLO CORPO" with CELESTE CESCUTTI and with ONDINA QUADRI an ITALIAN - FRENCH - SLOVENIAN COPRODUCTION produced by NEFERTITI FILM with RAI CINEMA in coproduction with TOMSA FILMS and VERTIGO supported by MIC DIREZIONE GENERALE CINEMA E AUDIOVISIVO - EURIMAGES - AIDE AUX CINÉMAS DU MONDE - CNC - INSTITUT FRANÇAIS FONDO PER L'AUDIOVISIVO DEL FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA - FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA FILM COMMISSION - SLOVENSKI FILMSKI CENTER - FILMSKI STUDIO VIBA FILM ARTE/COFINOVA 16 - executive producer NADIA TREVISAN screenplay LAURA SAMANI ELISA DONDI MARCO BORROMEI cinematography MITJA LIČEN editing CHIARA DAINESE music FREDRIKA STAHL production design RACHELE MELIADÓ costum design LOREDANA BUSCEMI sound LUCA BERTOLIN RICCARDO SPAGNOL NATHALIE VIDAL line producer PAOLO BOGNA produced by NADIA TREVISAN ALBERTO FASULO THOMAS LAMBERT DANIJEL HOČEVAR directed by LAURA SAMANI world sales ALPHA VIOLET



# PICCOLO CORPO VAN LAURA SAMANI

14 JULI IN DE BIOSCOOP

Ook te zien op Picl

persvoorstelling: 4 juli 10:30 Het Ketelhuis

**VEDETTE** 

Boeking: Babette Wijntjes | 06 - 53 65 36 62 | [babette@vedettefilm.com](mailto:babette@vedettefilm.com)

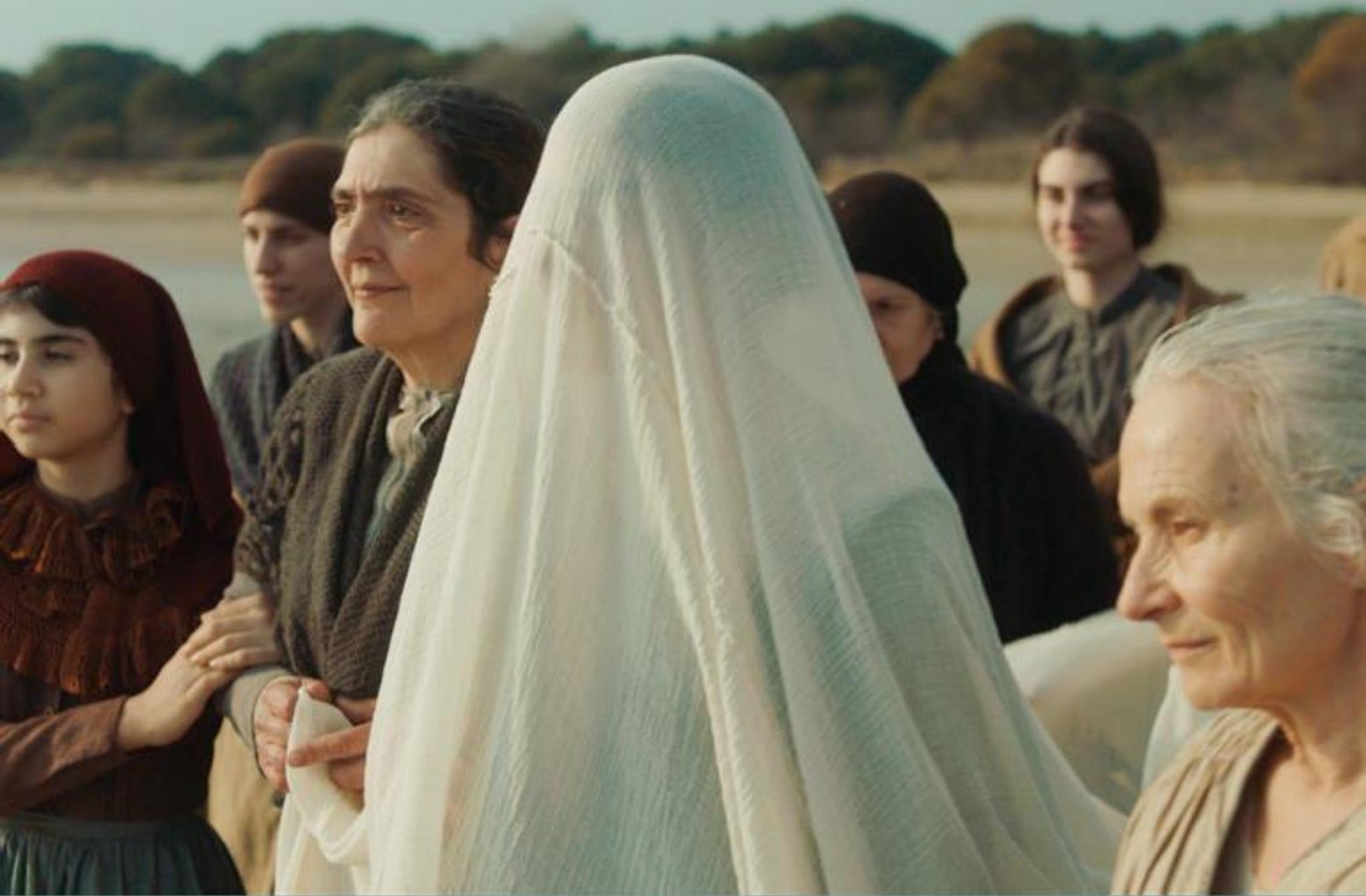
Pers: Roos de Soete | 020 - 48 68 212 | [roos@vedettefilm.com](mailto:roos@vedettefilm.com)

Marketing: Viktor Vandevelde | 020 - 48 68 212 | [viktor@vedettefilm.com](mailto:viktor@vedettefilm.com)

## SYNOPSIS

Italië, 1900. Agata besluit in haar eentje een reis te maken door het ruige Italië op zoek naar verlossing voor haar dochter. Een missie niet geheel zonder gevaren als jonge vrouw in die tijd. Onderweg vindt ze hulp van de rondtrekkende Lynx en samen trotseren ze de elementen, vooroordelen en het betoverende maar intimiderende Italiaanse landschap op zoek naar een wonder voor haar kindje De cinematografie en het idyllische landschap zijn toneel voor dit mythische sprookje over moederschap, onverwachte vriendschap en de kracht van een vrouw. Laura Samani laat zien met dit prijswinnende debuut op het Film Festival van Cannes, dat ze een talent is om in de gaten te houden.

Italië / Frankrijk / Slovenië – 2021 – 89min –  
Italiaans dialect



## CAST

Celeste Cescutti (Agata)

Ondina Quadri (Lynx)

## CREDITS

Regisseur: Laura Samani

Producent: Nadia Trevisan, Alberto Fasulo

Co-producenten: Thomas Lambert, Danijel Hočevan

DOP: Mitja Ličen

Art direction: Rachele Meliadò

Editor: Chiara Dainese

Componist: Fredrika Stahl

Sound Design: Riccardo Spagnol

## OVER LAURA SAMANI



Laura Samani werd geboren in 1989 in Triëst. Na haar studie Filosofie & Literatuur aan de Universiteit van Pisa, studeerde ze regie aan het Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (Rome). Haar afstudeerfilm, *The Sleeping Saint*, ging in première in Cannes Cinéfondation in 2016. Sindsdien kreeg de film internationale bijval en ontving deze prijzen op verschillende internationale festivals. *Piccolo Corpo* is haar eerste speelfilm. Haar werk werd eerder door Screendaily vergeleken met dat van Alice Rohrwachter.







## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 2016, I discovered that in Trava, in my Friuli Venezia-Giulia, existed a sanctuary where up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particular miracles were said to occur: that stillborn children could be brought back to life for the space of one breath. A miracle such as this was necessary in order to baptize these babies, who were otherwise condemned to be buried in unconsecrated grounds, like burying a dead cat. Without baptism they could never have a name or an identity; their souls would wander eternally in Limbo. These kinds of places are called *à répit*, or sanctuaries of breath or truce, and were present throughout the Alps (France alone had nearly two hundred) and it is surprising that this history is nearly totally unknown despite the size of the phenomenon. The story of these miracles got snagged in some nook of my mind and stayed there, calling for attention.

I was struck by one thing in particular: it was mainly men who would travel to these sanctuaries with the small bodies of their infants. Naturally, the women who had just given birth were confined to their beds but I couldn't get past the helpless wait they were subject to.

The first question I asked the co-authors, Elisa Dondi and Marco Borrromei, who decided to stay with me on my journey, which began with *La santa che dorme*, was: what happens to the woman in bed? What if, instead, it is she who decides to go? Thus we began writing with only two certainties: the she is Agata, and this is her first pregnancy.

When the baby is stillborn, Agata grieves but is unable to

simply go on, the way everybody else around her seems to. For me, the best part of a story is that moment in life when a character decides to rebel. Agata's choice is practically scandalous because it denotes pride and protest not only against her religion but also the laws of nature. There comes a precise moment, usually at night, in which the possibilities before us suddenly appear to consist of only one choice and it is then that destiny is made. Agata decides to listen to the voices talking about the miracles. Following her instinct and without telling anybody, she sets off on a voyage with her baby in a small box. Alone. Obviously, the practice of resuscitating babies was not seen kindly by the Church because it was an abuse of the sacraments and akin to witchcraft. Agata undertakes a voyage to the outer reaches of the unknown, abandoning her roots and risking the loss of self as well as death. Her conscious desire is to give her daughter a name in order to be able to let her go, both of them distinct individuals at that point, but the truth is that this voyage is a way to prolong the state of symbiosis with her daughter that Agata experienced for months – a sort of continuation of her pregnancy whereby the baby is transferred from her stomach to her back, becoming a weight she bears on her shoulders. Her voyage is physical but becomes transcendental. Agata doesn't realize that in order to continue her mission she must transform herself, become dead among the living.

Agata needed a travelling companion and this is how the character of Lynx came to be: wild and cunning, closed to everyone because to love is to be compromised, weakened. Lynx shows Agata the way, offering protection, but

what he will receive from her in return is something just as necessary for survival: the profound sense of attachment to something loved; commitment, sacrifice, the sense of belonging to something you can't control and that renders you vulnerable. Thanks to Agata, Lynx is reunited with that part that is the archetype feminine side, which has the courage to accept the dark side of love: pain.

While I located the film in my homeland, this rooting to territory does not mean this story is only of that place. I think stories are the same everywhere. I shot in a chronological continuity undertaking the same kind of voyage that Agata takes, from the Caorle and Bibione laguna to the Carnia and Tarvisiano mountains. This film has grown with us as we have with it.

While researching locations I met the people who have become characters in the film, or perhaps it was the other way around since neither can be considered without the other. Almost the entire cast is made up of people who have never acted before; in some cases, entire families. It is also for this reason that I decided to shoot the film in the Veneto and Friuli dialects, not just in order to provide the authentic language of that time, honoring the different variations so that the people could express themselves as much as possible in the most natural way. The process of imposing standardized Italian began in the second half of the 1800's and continued under fascism, a political operation to enable control over the territory that caused a huge cultural impoverishment but, luckily, did not succeed in entirely extinguishing the wide variety of different idioms. I think dialect is a precious and

often moving enrichment: it's enough to note that the word for child in the Friuli dialect is *frut*, because a child is the fruit of its parents.

For various reasons and often unrelated to the story itself, all the people involved found something of themselves in the story and its themes. This is why we often ended up talking more about life than cinema, and learning from each other: at times I was the one directing them and at other times, they were the ones guiding me. Transversality is the best form of creating.

In the film, God is not to be found in miracles or prayer, or in dogma that divides the afterlife into paradise, hell and limbo. God exists on a different level: in Lynx, who believes in nothing and is thus untouched by the initial premise of miracles; in Agata, who harnesses anger in order to redraw the confines of what is possible; and in the relationship between these two solitary views that, for a moment, are less painful. There is a thin line that divides life from death, reality from magic, the possibilities we have hoped for and the time left to us.

I hope that this film creates a greater shared space without the presumption of finding absolute answers in order to live in doubt together.

# FESTIVALS & AWARDS

**2021**

Cannes World Premiere – Critics' Week in Competition

Montenegro Film Festival

Sarajevo Film Festival

TIFF – Contemporary World Cinema

Hamburg Film Festival

Annecy Italian Film Festival – Audience Award

Villerupt Italian Film Festival – Special Jury Mention

BFI London Film Festival – Special Commendation

Haifa Film Festival -Panorama

Montpellier – Cinemed- Students ' Award for best 1st feature

Busan International Film Festival – World Cinema

Warsaw Film Festival – Discoveries

Morelia Film Festival

Vancouver Film Festival

New Zealand International Film Festival

Scanorama Film Festival

Festa do Cinema Italiano (Lisbon) – Competition Best Film Winner

Stockholm Film Festival – Competition

Seville European Film Festival – Extraordinary Stories Award

Cambridge Film Festival

Thessaloniki Film Festival – Meet the Neighbors GOLDEN Alexander Award

Liffe Award Ljubljana – FIPRESCI Prize

Chéries, Chéris Film Festival France – Best Actresses Award for Celeste and Undine

Cairo Film Festival, SILVER PYRAMID, Best Director Award

REC Film Festival Tarragona – Best Debut Film, Special CineClub Jury Mention

**2022**

Dublin Film Festival – Best Filmmaker Award

Zinegoack Bilbao Queer Film Festival- Winner of the Best Feature

Santa Barbara Film Festival

Boulder Film Festival

Cartagena International Film Festival- Fictions from everywhere

DAVID DI DONATELLO nomination for Best Filmmaker

DAVID DI DONATELLO nomination for Best Music



# OVER VEDETTE

Vedette is een door vrouwen geleide filmuitgeverij die ernaar streeft een poortwachter te zijn van meer inclusieve en relevante cinema. Waar elk hedendaags verhaal een kans krijgt om verteld te worden en waar hard wordt gewerkt vanuit liefde voor film. Rebels van aard zijn we niet bang om risico's te nemen en de status-quo uit te dagen. Of het nu gaat om een release in de bioscopen of online, Vedette zoekt naar de beste match tussen films en publiek. Voor minder doen we het niet.

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