SHANA
The Wolf's Music
A FILM BY NINO JACUSSO WITH SUNSHINE O'DONOVAN DELILAH DICK MARCEL SHACKELLY ALANA ASPINALL
VONNET HALL MARTY ASPINALL AND THE REAL ACTORS OF SOWEXMX THE PEOPLE OF THE CREEK

pre se nt

SHANA

The Wolf's Music

A film by Nino Jacusso
based on a novel by Federica de Cesco

Switzerland / Canada 2014 / 95 min.
1:2.35 Cinemascope / colour / OV English / dubbed version in German / 5.1. Dolby Digital / DCP 24 fps

First national screening: Solothurner Filmtage January 2014
Cinema Release Switzerland: (German Part) 20th of March 2014

www.shanafilm.com

Production
RECK Filmproduction, Franziska Reck, www.reckfilm.ch

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Distributor Canada
Cinema Esperança International Inc., Toronto, Ontario, andre.m.bennett@sympatico.ca

Shana – The Wolf's Music

Press Kit (Short Version)

For more information: www.shanafilm.com

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1. SYNOPSIS

Shana is a very talented musician. She lives with her father in a First Nations village in Canada. In the past she was a happy girl who, together with her mother, played violins joyfully at celebrations. But two years ago, her mother went into the forest and never came back. Shana feels lonely and abandoned and the fact that her father tries to drown his sorrow in alcohol does not make it easier for her: Shana is retreating more and more into her own world. She stops going to school and hardly ever plays her violin any more. Hoping that she will somehow receive a sign from her mother, she writes heart-rending notes to her and hangs them in a special ancestor tree, which is decorated with amulets. A white wolf watches her from a distance whenever she comes to the tree. It seems to be magically drawn to her, appearing from the forest whenever she plays her violin.

After a long break, Shana's village get a new teacher, Lela Woodland. Lela is also of indigenous origins. She knows the particular situation of present-day First Nations from her own personal experience, knows how to inspire the students and tries with sensitivity and perseverance to draw Shana out of her state of withdrawal. When she hears Shana play the violin she is convinced that she has discovered great talent and registers her at the music school in Vancouver.

But a few days before the entrance exam, Shana's father sells the antique wolf's head violin, which had previously belonged to Shana's mother. Now Shana has only one alternative. She must retrieve this memento that is so important to her. During her adventurous search, Shana plunges deeper and deeper into the forest. For three days and nights she disappears into free Nature. There she encounters the white wolf and the spirits of her ancestors. Somewhere between trance and dream, Shana finds her way to a magic method of playing the violin that prepares her for encountering the wide world.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

The First Nations girl Shana is a very gifted musician. But to bring her violin to sing, she must follow the wolf. Nino Jacusso has filmed this captivating coming-of-age drama with sensational beauty and spiritual tenderness.

LOGLINE

A First Nations girl, a wolf and a violin – and the magic of music.

2. REVIEW

With his new film "Shana", Nino Jacusso („Escape to Paradise") presents the compelling film version of Federica De Cesco's novel „Shana and her Wolf". The Italian-Swiss shot his film at the Lower Nicola reservation in British Columbia. All the actors and actresses in the film are First Nations members from the Scw'exmx tribe. Delilah Dick is outstanding in her role as the kind-hearted, determined teacher – a true discovery. Sunshine O'Donovan plays Shana so that she and her rough sensitivity are highly credible.

Filmed with sensational beauty, „Shana" is the coming-of-age drama of a young First Nations teenager who – without losing contact to her people and their traditions – searches for her way into today's world. „Shana", accompanied by a soundtrack of ritual rhythms and traditional melodies, is an emotionally moving film that will enthrall the whole family.

3. DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

First Nations have interested me since I was a boy. I imagined how great it would be to ride with them through the prairie on the back of my pony, to sit at the campfire with them and listen to the stories of the wise old women and men. And I was bitterly disappointed when I found out that the Winnetou films had been shot in Yugoslavia and that Pierre Brice is French. After that, I tried reading Karl May but his books were too tedious and wordy for me – and then, when I learned that Karl May had never even been with the First Nations, I was terribly shocked.
One day my mother, who worked at the Union Printers in Solothurn, brought me „The red silk Scarf" by Federica De Cesco and that was when I found a new access into the world of the First Nations. As a boy, I was relatively lonely: my school colleagues preferred to play soccer. So I began to dream: about a film with real First Nations, taken in their homeland.

During my work on the documentary film „Federica de Cesco, mein Leben, meine Welten" (2008) the idea came to me that I should film one of the novels written by Federica de Cesco. There were only two possible considerations for my film: „Shana das Wolfsmädchen" as well as „Aischa or the Sun of Life". My daughter, who was ten years old at the time, tipped the scales: she absolutely wanted to go to the First Nations.

I set forth with a good friend who lives in Switzerland but comes from the tribe of the Onondaga to look for Shana's village in Canada. In the Nicola Valley we not only found a village and a location to film that looked like what I had imagined. We also met the Scw'exmx, people of the creeks. Now we just had to find someone to play Shana. But the search dragged on for quite some time until Leona Rabbitt, culture mediator and Shaman, offered to help us. One morning before sunrise, in a special ceremony, we prayed that we would find our Shana – and by the afternoon of the same day, Sunshine O'Donovan was standing in our casting office.

For as long as I can remember, in all my film work it was the interfaces that interested me: the point where fiction and reality merge and something new is created. Also, making films means to me the building of bridges: between people but also between cultures. In all my other films I developed the plot together with the persons who later also stood in front of the camera. And that is how it happened with „Shana": I worked together with the actors, who all belonged to the tribe of the Scw'exmx on the story of „Shana" until the story became a part of their own cultural reality.

In „Shana," an old "wolf's head"-violin plays an important role. And what I did not know before the film was that this kind of violin is known and loved by the southern First Nations tribes. Its four strings symbolize not only the four heavenly or cardinal (wind) directions but also the four ages of man: Childhood, Youth, Adulthood and Old Age. Different from the Shana in De Cesco's book, who plays classical music, the Shana in the film plays "her" music, the music she has received from her ancestors and from Nature. Music and song serve as direct communication with the Hereafter.

Towards the end of the film, when Shana goes into the forest, she encounters her

First Mother (her primordial mother) and is taunted by her. Our primordial mothers want us to be strong in our earthly life, to fight for what we want, not hide behind the skirts of our earthly mothers. The Scw'exmx call this the "Vision Quest". For three days and three nights, young people go into the forest to encounter their ancestors and return as young adults.

With „Shana – The Wolf's Music“ a long cherished dream of mine came true: I have made a film about real First Nations in their homeland. The Scw'exmx had given me, the film and the viewers a part of their soul and I have never been happier than in the moment when, after the screening of „Shana“, they Elders told me that our film was now a part of their culture. Afterwards, I went to the mountain with the Shaman Leona Rabbitt a second time and, in a ceremony, we asked for a blessing on the release of our common project.

Nino Jacusso, November 2013

4. CAST

Shana	SUNSHINE O’DONOVAN
Lela Woodland (Teacher)	DELILAH DICK
Melanie Bent (Mother)	ALANA ASPINALL
Elliot Bent (father)	MARCEL SHACKELLY
First Mother, the primordial mother	MARTY ASPINALL
Jeff Morgan (sawmill owner)	VONNET HALL

5. CREW

Director	NINO JACUSSO
Screenplay	NINO JACUSSO
Producer	FRANZISKA RECK
Co- Producers Canada	HENRIK MEYER/ CYNDE HARMON
Director of Photography	SEVERINE BARDE s.c.s.
Additional Camera	DANIEL LEIPPERT
Editing	LOREDANA CRISTELLI
Music	ROMAN LERCH
Title Song	ANNA KAENZIG
Sound Recording	HUGO POLETTI
Lighting	VINCE LAXTON
Production Design	KATHRIN BRUNNER
Costume Design	DOROTHEE SCHMID
Hair/Make Up	APRIL BEER
Cultural Consulting & Casting	LEONA RABBITT
Cultural Consulting	NAOMI PFENNINGER
1st Assistant D.O.P.	UELI NUESCH
DIT & Assistant Additional Camera	MILIVOJ IVKOVICH
Boom Operator	JAN ILLING
Sound Design & Mischung	CHRISTIAN BEUSCH
Picture Design	PATRICK LINDENMAIER
Commissioning Editor SRF	TAMARA MATTLE
Production Executive SRF	ESTHER RUTSCHMANN
SRG SSR	SVEN WÄLTI

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SHANA - THE WOLF'S MUSIC Screenplay based on the novel
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