



Penelope
PRESSKIT

ARTEMIS PROJECTS & FOCUS MEDIA PRESENT

PENELOPE

Running Time: 80 Minutes
Country: Australian / Croatian
Language: Croatian with English subtitles

For more information, images and music, visit www.penelopa.com.au

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Adapted from one of the most famous stories of all time, award-winning Australian writer-director Ben Ferris gives us a fresh interpretation of the tale of Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, who waits for twenty years for her husband to return from the Trojan War.

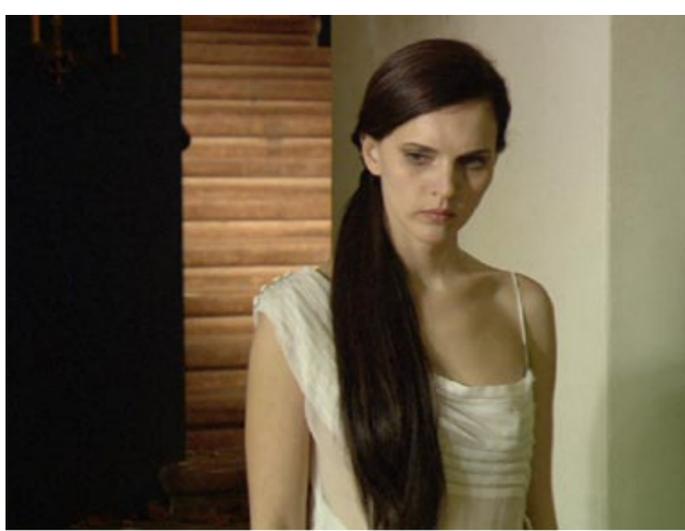
Set in a mythic time and space, the film's power lies in its ability to step inside Penelope's head tormented by the loss of her great love and her yearning for his return. Her nightmares, hopes and memories become so entangled that reality grows as intangible as her distant husband. Finally, pushed to her limits, Penelope confronts her inevitable and tragic destiny.

The film is visually intoxicating with its use of long take cinematography, chiaroscuro lighting, sumptuous costume design, beautifully choreographed performances and the melancholic, ethereal score of renowned composer Max Richter.

Photographed by award-winning DOP James Barahanos within Brezovica Castle in Zagreb, Penelopa is the first ever Australian-Croatian co-production. The film is produced in the Croatian language with English subtitles.

"Ferris gives the Penelope of Homer a new meaning, closer to contemporary female roles: the woman who tends the bow and faces misery with her arrows, without losing sensitivity and the longing to be loved"
Melissa Navarro, Mexican Film Critic





FILM INFO

- Art feature film Penelope is an experimental study on time and space
- Film is set in 'a mythic time and space' with some contemporary allusions
- Film is a series of long takes
- The longest continuous take is an 8 and a half minute sequence in the forest
- The performances are stylised through movement, with very little dialogue
- Music composer Max Richter wrote the music before the filming started, and the scenes were choreographed to the music played back on set
- The story of 'Penelope' is influenced by both Homer and James Joyce
- Director who is a Classics scholar adapted the story by studying the original Ancient Greek Homeric language
- Cinematic influences are: Tarkovsky, Fassbinder, Greenaway, Fellini and Kurosawa
- Filmed in Croatia in November 2007 and May 2008
- First Australian / Croatian co-production
- Independently funded
- Director Ben Ferris and Director of Photography James Barahanos have history in 'one-take' filmmaking with internationally acclaimed short films 'Ascension' and 'The Kitchen'
- The film is the last surviving work of legendary Australian production designer Jennie Tate
- Jennie's designs are heavily influenced by Japanese fashion
- The film is shot entirely in HD using the Sony F900 Cinealta camera
- Independent producer Irena Markovic also produced Croatian ground-breaking film 'Slow Days'

STORY

Penelope, the mythical character from Homer's *The Odyssey*, is waiting for her husband Odysseus to return from the Trojan War. She waits for twenty years.

In this film adaptation, set in a mythic time and space, with contemporary influences and attitudes, Penelope wanders alone through her enormous castle, often in a dreamlike state, each room a different memory. In these rooms she has visions of her husband, and memories of happier times together.

In heavy contrast twenty revolting suitors sit at the dining table as a constant reminder of the present, forever eating, drinking, snoring and swearing. They are growing restless of waiting for Penelope to make a decision

HOMER'S 'THE ODYSSEY'

Penelope first featured in Homer's Epic "The Odyssey" around 800BC, some 2807 years ago.

In Homer's treatment of the story Penelope is waiting for her husband to return from the Trojan War and refuses to believe that he has died. She waits for twenty years as she watches her son, Telemachos, grow into a man.

After 17 years of waiting the 108 suitors begin to arrive in her house, all seeking to win her hand in marriage.

She tells them that she will choose to remarry once she has completed a funeral shroud that she is weaving for Odysseus' dead father. By day she weaves the shroud. By night she unweaves the work she has done, thereby delaying her decision to remarry.

as to which of them she shall marry. Indeed, it seems, that she will have none of them. Mutiny hangs in the air, and Penelope's loyal maidservants are on the menu.

Penelope is transformed by faith and suffering from the passive wife of antiquity into a tragic heroine and she will not wait for her husband to return before she sets things right.

The suitors discover this trick and become hostile. She decides to hold a contest of the bow. Whichever of the suitors can string Odysseus' hunting bow and send an arrow through twelve axe heads, lined in a row, she will give her hand in marriage.

However, Odysseus returns home in disguise as an old beggar and foils the contest by stringing the bow himself and then killing all the suitors in the dining hall.

Thus Penelope and Odysseus are united at last...

MUSIC

An original score composed by celebrated composer Max Richter is a prominent feature of the film and drives the emotional core.

MUSIC COMPOSER

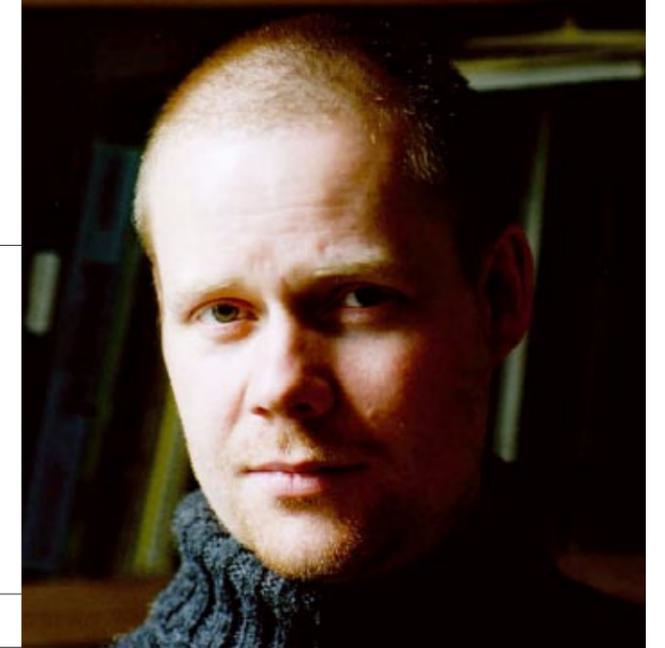
Max Richter trained in composition and piano at Edinburgh University, at the Royal Academy of Music, and with Luciano Berio in Florence.

On completing his studies, Max co-founded the iconoclastic classical ensemble Piano Circus, where he stayed for ten years, commissioning and performing works by Arvo Pärt, Brian Eno, Philip Glass, Julia Wolfe and Steve Reich.

In the late 90s he worked with a number of electronic artists, notably Future Sound of London on their album 'Dead Cities'. He subsequently collaborated with FSOL over a period of two years, also contributing to the albums "The Isness" and "The Peppermint Tree and Seeds of Superconsciousness". Max also collaborated with Mercury Prize winner Roni Size, on "In the Mode".

In June 2002, Max released his debut solo album, "memoryhouse", recorded with The BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. This was followed in March 2004 by FatCat's release of "The Blue Notebooks", with featured readings by Tilda Swinton.

In 2005 Max produced Vashti Bunyan's outstanding comeback album "Lookaftering".



2006 saw the release of "Songs From Before" based on Haruki Murakami texts read by Robert Wyatt. That same year, Max began performing "from The Art of Mirrors", an evolving score to previously unseen Super 8mm films of Derek Jarman.

Max's more recent work continues to stretch the notions of what Classical music is. '24 Postcards In Full Colour', released in August 2008, is an experimental work made up of 24 composed ringtones.

Max works widely in film music, installation and the theatre, most recently on INFRA, made with Wayne MacGregor and Julian Opie for The Royal Ballet, London. The Ballet was the subject of a BBC 'making of' documentary.

Max was named 2008 European Composer Of The Year for his score to Ari Folman's *Waltz With Bashir*, for which he was also nominated for the Prix France Musique.

CREW

DIRECTOR



Ben Ferris was born in 1975 in Sydney, Australia. He studied Latin and Classical Greek at the University of Sydney, winning both the Salting Exhibition and Coopers Scholarship. In 1998 he graduated with First Class Honours in Classical Greek, after reconstructing the surviving fragments of the “Alexandros”, a play by the Athenian tragedian, Euripides.

From 1992 - 2004 he acted and directed in the theatre in Sydney, establishing the Two Black Shoes Theatre Company, with which he performed and directed for the Sydney Festival. In 2002-3 he worked as a literary consultant for the Griffin Theatre Company.

In 2000 Ben established the UBS Film School at the University of Sydney which he ran from 2000 - 2004, and in 2004 he founded the Sydney Film School where he is currently Executive Director.

Ben’s short film “The Kitchen” first brought him to Croatia to screen at the Inaugural One Take Film Festival held in Zagreb in 2003. In 2004 he won the Grand Prix at the same festival for his one-take film “Ascension”, and in 2006 he was present as an international juror.

His film “The Kitchen”, which also screened at the prestigious L’Etrange Film Festival in Paris in 2004 and the 20th Singapore Film Festival in 2007, attracted international critical acclaim by winning the Grand Prix at the Inaugural Akira Kurosawa Memorial Short Film Festival held in Tokyo in 2005. In 2006 it was released by the Kurosawa Foundation in Tokyo Cinemas as part of an omnibus feature film entitled “Life Cinematic”.

PRODUCER



Croatian producer Irena Markovic was born in Zagreb on November 3rd, 1965. She studied Mathematics and Computer Science in the Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb. After graduation she worked as a systems analyst and software developer and she co-founded a computer company ‘Samson Informatika’.

Since 1993 Irena has been active in the theatre and film industry. Her other qualifications include a filmmaking course at the ‘Film Club Zagreb’, film workshop for feature film and a number of acting courses taken over a 9 years period.

From 2000 to 2003 she worked at the Motovun Film Festival. Since 2003 she has been a producer of the internationally acclaimed One Take Film Festival – an international festival of films shot in one take. In the same year she also co-founded the production company Focus Media where she works as managing director and producer of various projects.

In 2006 Irena produced her first feature film, ‘Slow Days’ directed by Matija Klukovic. Until now the film has participated at several film festivals winning both audience and critical acknowledgements. In 2006 ‘Slow Days’ won the Best Croatian Film Award at the prestigious Zagreb Film Festival and screened at Libertas Film Festival in Dubrovnik. The film had its international premiere at the 2007 International Film Festival Rotterdam.

LEAD ACTRESS / Penelope



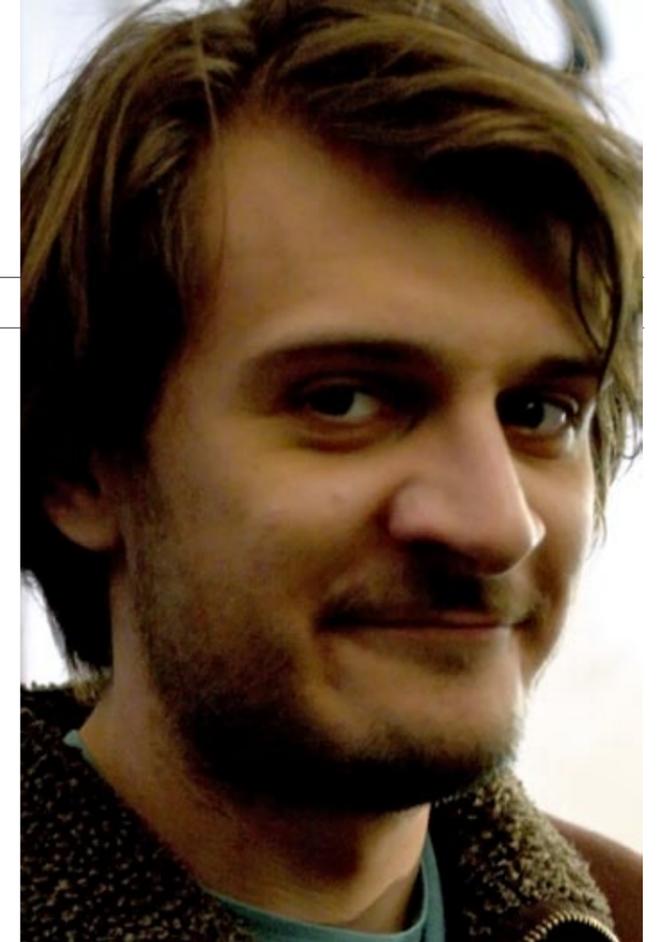
Australian actress Natalie Finderle was born in Sydney in 1979. She studied Visual Arts at Sydney College of the Arts, majoring in Ceramics and graduating in 2001. She has since put aside working with clay and taken on a passion for abstract painting using a variety of media to build a small collection which she plans to show in the not-to-distant future.

Shortly after finishing University Natalie went on to open a café in one of Sydney's inner suburbs, just around the corner from the Sydney Film School. It was here where she met Ben Ferris who offered her a main role in his film 'Penelope'. Although she had never experienced anything similar, and not even dreamed of doing so, Natalie decided to accept Ben's offer.

A few months later she found herself in Zagreb, Croatia – the birth country of her father. In spite of her half Croatian - half Hungarian (her mother is from Hungary) background, Natalie had never actually visited her father's homeland before. The unique experience she had there caused her to fall in love with the country and has driven her decision to apply for Croatian citizenship.

The debut role of Penelope showed Natalie a completely new world. She describes it as a great challenge and an eye-opening introduction to film art. Her until-recently dormant talent and undeniably strong screen presence astounded everyone on the 'Penelope' set...

LEAD ACTOR / Odysseus



Croatian actor Frano Mašković was born in Dubrovnik, on May 6th 1978. He majored in acting at the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb in 2004. Since 2006 he has been a principal member of the Zagreb Youth Theatre.

His acting work includes both theatre and film. As a theatre actor he's had at least 6 leading and more than 10 supporting roles. In 2003 he played a lead male role in the Zagreb Youth Theatre production 'The Fifth Gospel'. In 2004 Paolo Magelli gave him a role in the theatre adaptation of 'Grižula' and he interpreted the role of Claudius in the East West Production of 'Hamlet'.

2007 was a big year for Frano. He played in four big theatre productions and had the honour to work with a great theatre director and writer Jan Fabre on his play 'Requiem für eine metamorphoseis'. In the same year he was discovered by Australian director Ben Ferris who offered him a lead male role in his feature 'Penelope'.

Besides 'Penelope' the 31 year-old actor has appeared in almost 10 films, a considerably large number given the overall size of Croatian production. For someone to whom theatre happened quite unexpectedly, "out of boredom" as he says, he has accomplished some enviable achievements. Today he is considered, both by directors and critics, to be one of the most talented young actors in Croatia and he is currently exploring the possibilities of collaborating with foreign directors and gaining experiences abroad.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY



James Barahanos is a Sydney-based director of photography / filmmaker, with a foundation in the visual arts and sciences. He has university degrees in both fields with post-graduate studies in design and technology from the University of Technology Sydney. A graduate of the College of Fine Arts UNSW, he began his filmmaking journey by experimenting with super – 8 film.

While working in the television area, particularly in live broadcast operations and as an independent filmmaker he developed his own personal style of cinematography - one that explores and encompasses the difficult art of long sequence photography. He has developed a reputation over the years for unique cinematography which heavily explores abstraction, psychology and emotion.

His work has been represented in numerous Australian and overseas film festivals in Europe and Asia and his cinematographic work gained numerous awards, including the Akira Kurosawa Award Japan (2005) and the International Festival of Cinema & Technology (IFCT) Award USA (2006) for best experimental cinematography.

He describes photography for the cinema as follows: "The art of cinematography is taking the technique out of art." JB.

PRODUCTION DESIGNER



Jennie Tate, one of Australia's leading costume and set designers was born in Melbourne in August 1947. Before embarking on a multifaceted career in which she worked in theatre, opera, film and television, this indefatigable and much-loved figure in the art scene trained at the Melbourne Theatre Company. In the late 80s she came to Sydney following the invitation of the film producer Margaret Fink to design the clothes for Stephen Wallace's film 'For Love Alone'. This brought her one of several nominations for the Australian Film Industry, one of which she won in 1987 for costume work on 'The Umbrella Women'.

Jennie Tate worked for most major theatre companies in Australia as well as working and exhibiting in Japan. Her designs have appeared at the Sydney Theatre Company, Belvoir St Theatre, Playbox, The Melbourne Theatre Company, The State Theatre of South Australia and Opera Australia. Among her favourite productions are: 'Master Class' seen in every major Australian city; 'Andrea Chenier' and 'Tristan and Isolde' for the Australian Opera; John Bell's 'Comedy of Errors'; 'The Glass Menagerie' and 'Three Days of Rain' at the Wharf Theatre; 'A Month In the Country' at the Opera House; 'Head of Mary' at the Playbox; 'Maria Stuarda' with Yvonne Kenny in Melbourne and Sydney, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' for Bell Shakespeare's Company and many, many more.

Tate's long association with Japan and its festivals and arts spread over 25 years. During this period she researched into performance in rural and urban folk festivals, studied contemporary and traditional art forms, conducted seminars and exhibited her designs, and worked with major Japanese companies. She was simply in love with all things Japanese: the people, the festivals, temples, art, clothes, houses, superstitions and, in particular, bathhouses. Her first introduction to Japan was as an assistant to Takeshi Hoshino with the Puppet theatre P.U.K. After that she worked at the Imperial theatre in Tokyo as costume designer on "Yokohama Story" and designed the costumes for "Miss Julie", starring Kyoko Kishida. She also designed sets and costumes for "Dance of Death" which visited Tokyo in 2000 and costumes for "Head of Mary" which won The Uchimura Prize at the Tokyo Metropolitan Arts Festival.

As artist-in-residence at the Tokyo Institute of Technology in 2006, Jennie began filming the documentary linked to her research. Awarded an Australian Council fellowship to study the theatrical applications of digital imaging, she shot remarkable footage of daily life on barges along the Sumida River. Taking Tokyo as the basis for research, she identified it as 'the modern city where dark and light, myth and reality, the pragmatic and poetic, all exist side by side'.

Jennie Tate's theatre achievements were accompanied by her unforgettable contributions to both television and film. Apart from 'For Love Alone' and 'Umbrella Women' she worked on the production design for 'Aya', 'The Tennis Ball', 'Windows' and Michael Bates' prize-winning short film 'The Projectionist'. Her work for television includes costume designs for the mini-series 'The Potato Factory', 'Eden's Lost', 'Wreck of the Stinson', 'The Story of Johnny O'Keefe' and for Children's Television, 'Escape from Jupiter', 'Just Friends' and 'Paper Boy'.

Costume and set designs for 'Penelope' were unfortunately Jennie's last film work. Shortly after coming back from Croatia she lost a long-running battle against cancer, leaving the art world shocked and full of praise. John Bell described her as 'one of Australia's leading designers who was heavily influenced by her love of Japanese art and design' and was also 'a great teacher - teaching design at the National Institute of Dramatic Art.' Elke Neidhardt found her uniqueness in the profound 'understanding of the character, a whimsical, playful quality and a colossal sense of style' and her close friend, theatre director Rodney Fisher stated that 'her eye for detail, her understanding of colour and her feel for design was just quite remarkable'.

At the time of her death Jennie just finished costume designs for Elke Neidhardt's production of 'Don Giovanni' and was busy finishing set and costume designs for Bell Shakespeare's 'As You like it' and 'Madame Butterfly'.



SELECT REVIEWS

"If Bill Viola and Peter Greenaway had an illegitimate love child, it would be Penelope. Stylistic and contemplative - the lavish settings and rich cinematography provide a transcendent situation for the spectator to live this artwork."

Stefan Popescu, Sydney Underground Film Festival Director

"Ferris gives the Penelope of Homer a new meaning, closer to contemporary female roles: the woman who tends the bow and faces misery with her arrows, without losing sensitivity and the longing to be loved"

Melissa Navarro, Mexican Film Critic

"Penelopa is certainly more intriguing than a significant part of so-called mainstream commercial cinema"

Tomislav Sakic, Croatian Film Critic

"the film is a kind of conceptual consideration of the liturgical act from the Hellenistic tragic theatre"

Tomislav Sakic, Croatian Film Critic

"Penelopa offers an array of beautiful image-frames and very successful scenes, sometimes hypnotic in their deliberate slowness and aesthetic atmosphere of Penelope's melancholic waiting for the return of her beloved"

Tomislav Sakic, Croatian Film Critic