

Beta Cinema

presents

VITA MIA

a film by **EDOARDO WINSPEARE**

starring **DOMINIQUE SANDA, CELESTE CASCIARO, NINNI BRUSCHETTA,
IGNAZIO OLIVA, KAROLINA PORCARI, JOHANNA ORSINI, FRANCESCA
ZIGGIOTTI, DORA SZTARENKI, JOSEF SCHOLLER**

with the participation of **STEFAN LIECHTENSTEIN** and **CHRISTIAN
LIECHTENSTEIN**



World Sales

Beta Cinema // beta@betacinema.com // Phone: +49 | 89 | 673469 – 828

www.betacinema.com

MAIN CREW LIST

Directed by	Edoardo Winspeare
Story by	Edoardo Winspeare, Alessandro Valenti, Francesca Marciano
Screenplay by	Edoardo Winspeare, Alessandro Valenti
In collaboration with	Mariangela Barbanente
Director of Photography	Roberta Allegrini
Editor	Luca Benedetti
Music by	Pablo Buonvino, GOODLAB Music
Set Design	Sabrina Balestra
Costume Design	Stefania Grilli
Sound Design	Riccardo Milano, Piero Francellu, Gianluigi Gallo
Production	Stemal Entertainment, Saietta Film
In collaboration with	Rai Cinema
Produced by	Donatella Palermo, Gustavo Caputo
With the support of	MIC – DG Cinema e Audiovisio, Puglia Region, the Apulia Film Commission and Puglia Promozione
Supported by	Banca Popolare Pugliese SCPA
Executive Producer	Giorgio Magliulo for Stemal Entertainment
World Sales	Beta Cinema
Duration	125'

MAIN CAST LIST

Didi	Dominique Sanda
Vita	Celeste Casciaro
Alberto	Ninni Bruschetta
Luvi	Ignazio Oliva
Issi	Carolina Porcari
Sister Erzsebet	Johanna Orsini
Young Didi	Francesca Zigiotti
Agnes/Ester	Dora Sztarenki
Captain Wolff	Josef Scholler
And with	Stefan Liechtenstein, Christian Liechtenstein

LOGLINE

When Didi, an elderly aristocrat, retires to her palazzo in a small Apulian village, she forms an unlikely bond with Vita, her caregiver. As they delve into Didi's past, long-buried secrets come to light, leading to the healing of old wounds and the comfort of an unexpected friendship.

SYNOPSIS

Didi, an elderly and noble lady, has decided to retire to a small village in Apulia. Parkinson's disease forces her to seek the help of Vita, a woman with a strong personality and a popular background. Mutual acquaintance and respect allow the two women to overcome the social and cultural differences of their families of origin. Didi's days are interwoven with the economic difficulties of an impoverished aristocracy and the hallucinations caused by illness. Through these scenes, taken from Didi's memory, we discover the signs of the passage of the Nazi regime, the drama of the Shoà, the pain of having survived at the expense of others. Ultimately, the bond with Vita brings peace, and even something like happiness, in the discovery of a great friendship.

A sweeping tale of European history seen through the eyes of a noblewoman – from the aristocratic salons to the ateliers of Dior. Featuring an outstanding performance by Cannes Best Actress Award winner Dominique Sanda (*The Inheritance, Conformist, 1900, The Crimson Rivers*).

DIRECTORS NOTE

The idea for *VITA MIA* came to me as I observed, over the past few years, the relationship that my mother—who has Parkinson’s disease—developed with a woman from Salento who took care of her. She went from an initial sense of frustration and anger over her health to one of almost maternal tenderness toward this simple, intelligent, and very kind woman. By the time she reached the final chapter of her life and had to rely completely on her caregiver, the roles had reversed: my mother had become a child to be lovingly cared for, and the woman from Puglia a gentle mother who understood the needs of that elderly “daughter.”

My personal experience prompted me to write a fictional story that, nevertheless, shares many similarities with reality, especially regarding the family environment, the experience of illness, and the relationship between the two protagonists. I also chose, for dramatic reasons, to portray the characters of the two protagonists with greater harshness than that of my mother and the woman who cared for her. Although *VITA MIA* deals with Parkinson’s disease and a life nearing its end, the film aims to depict life in its entirety. The spirit of this female-centered story lies in the protagonists’ discovery of an unexpected bond, which leads them to experience a serene, at times joyful, final chapter of life: another version of love. And this despite the illness, the pain, and death, which are no longer so far away.

The film tells the story of an unusual friendship between a Transylvanian duchess suffering from Parkinson’s disease and a caregiver from Salento: two women who are polar opposites in terms of cultural background, language skills, geographic origin, and, of course, social class. Once they have overcome the misunderstandings stemming from their political views—Duchess Didi is a staunch anti-communist, while the caregiver Vita sympathizes with the communists—and dealt with a disastrous financial situation, their relationship will develop into a deep bond of mutual support, a source of empowerment for both. Vita will free herself from a degrading relationship with a petty man; Didi from the weight of a family legacy—the nightmares she experienced during World War II, which had been repressed until then, have resurfaced in the form of hallucinations; and both from the cultural prejudices and social structures from which we Europeans often cannot free ourselves.

The duchess and the caregiver, after an initial wariness, eventually become so close that they come to delight in discovering each other’s worlds, previously unknown to one another. The rituals, quirks, and traditions of European aristocracy, though absurd to some, become fascinating in Vita’s eyes, just as the warmth, spontaneity, and contradictions of a working-class family in Southern Italy are a breath of fresh air for Didi, accustomed to the manners and hypocrisy of the privileged social classes. For the duchess, in particular, her relationship with Vita represents an opportunity for human

revelation that melts her heart and, at the twilight of her long and rich life, makes her happy. In a nutshell, this is what the film is about: getting to know the other—a stranger even though close by—and the consequent discovery of their beauty. The epiphany of a true friendship.

However, the film is not merely the story of a human experience, but also a pretext for reflecting on Europe. The small story of Didi and Vita becomes a metaphor for the grand history of Europe. The Old Continent, in fact, with all its culture, history, languages, and societies, not only serves as the backdrop to our story but also influences its style, form, and thought, to the point of becoming the film's hidden protagonist. It is the Europe of millennia-old layers, which can be perceived simply by observing the characters of Vita and Didi. Both are heirs to traditions unbroken for centuries: the duchess is aware of this, while the woman from Salento is proud of it, albeit in a less articulate way, but both have received a Mediterranean upbringing.

But it is also the Europe of social conflicts, of ethnic and racial hatreds, of great totalitarianisms—such as nationalism and state religion—enemies of diversity and minorities that have bloodied the continent throughout the 20th century. Didi's suppression of these aspects and her aristocratic conviction that pain can be overcome through education and discipline, along with her belief that complaining is pointless and inelegant, will prove to be pure illusion, because all the horror of World War II will resurface during the journey to Transylvania, through the hallucinations caused by Parkinson's disease.

When I think of characters who might represent a particular land, I cannot help but imagine them as female. The two protagonists, besides being strong and fascinating women, embody in my imagination Transylvania, the Mitteleuropa of many peoples, Puglia, Southern Italy, and the entire Mediterranean. I know I risk sounding rhetorical and like a utopian idealist, but here I've decided to indulge myself: Didi and Vita are, for me, the Europe of differences finally reconciled.

Edoardo Winspeare

DOMINIQUE SANDA

Dominique Sanda was born in Paris. She began her career at a very young age under the direction of Robert Bresson and would go on to establish herself as one of the most important French actresses of her generation, thanks to numerous collaborations that made her a leading presence on film sets across Europe. Over the years, she became a muse for many renowned filmmakers, including Robert Bresson, Vittorio De Sica, Bernardo Bertolucci, Luchino Visconti, John Huston, Jacques Demy, Liliana Cavani, Louis Malle, Lina Wertmüller and Dino Risi.

Throughout her long career, she has received numerous major awards, including the Best Actress Award at the Cannes Film Festival in 1976 for her performance in *The Inheritance (L'eredità Ferramonti)* by Mauro Bolognini.

Filmography

2021 *The Peacock's Paradise* directed by Laura Bispuri
2021 *Il Giardino che non c'è* documentary, directed by Ră Di Martino
2019 *Young Pertini* directed by Giambattista Assanti
2019 *Karakol* directed by Saula Benavente
2014 *Saint Laurent* directed by Bertrand Bonello
2013 *A Beautiful Sunday* directed by Nicole Garcia
2000 *The Rivers of Purple* directed by Mathieu Kassovitz
2000 *The Island of the Mapmaker's Wife* directed by Michie Gleason
1998 *Garage Olimpo* directed by Marco Bechis
1998 *The Universe of Jacques Demy* directed by Agnès Varda
1992 *El viaje* directed by Fernando Solanas
1992 *Der grüne Heinrich* directed by Thomas Koerfer
1992 *Rosen von Emil* directed by Radu Gabrea
1991 *Naissance d'un Golem* directed by Amos Gitai
1990 *I, the Worst of All* directed by María Luisa Bemberg
1990 *I'll Be Off* directed by Dino Risi
1989 *On a Moonlit Night* directed by Lina Wertmüller
1988 *Warriors and Captives* directed by Edgardo Cozarinsky
1987 *Les mendiants* directed by Benoît Jacquot
1986 *Corps et Bien* directed by Benoît Jacquot
1984 *Le matelot 512* directed by René Allio
1983 *Poussière d'empire Hon Vong Phu* directed by Lâm Lê
1982 *L'indiscrétion* directed by Pierre Lary
1982 *A Room in Town* directed by Jacques Demy
1981 *Stories of Women* directed by Benoît Jacquot
1980 *A Sweet Journey* directed by Michel Deville
1980 *Cabo Blanco* directed by Jack Lee Thomson

1979 *Le Navire night* directed by Marguerite Duras
1979 *Utopia* directed by Iradj Azimi
1979 *The Song of Roland* directed by Frank Cassenti
1977 *The Last Odyssey* directed by Jack Smight
1976 *The Ferramonti Legacy* directed by Mauro Bolognini
and many more

CELESTE CASCIARO

Celeste Casciaro is best known for her leading role in *In grazia di Dio* by Edoardo Winspeare. Over the course of her career, she has appeared in five feature films, including *Amare amaro* by Julien Paolini, *Il miracolo*, *La vita in comune* and *Vita mia*, also directed by Edoardo Winspeare, as well as in several short films.

She has also appeared in various television series, including *Imma Tataranni*, *Braccialetti Rossi* and *Renata Fonte*.

For her performance in *Quiet Bliss*, she received nominations for both the Italian Filmaward, Nastro d'Argento, and the main award of the Italian Press Association, Globo d'Oro for Best Actress, and won the Lo Straniero Award for Best Female Performance.

Filmography

2019 *Imma Tataranni* by Francesco Amato
2018 *Amare amaro* by Julien Paolini
2018 *Una donna contro tutti – Renata Fonte* by Fabio Mollo
2017 *Life Together* by Edoardo Winspeare
2014 *Quiet Bliss* by Edoardo Winspeare
2003 *The Miracle* by Edoardo Winspeare

ABOUT EDOARDO WINSPEARE

“Ever since I can remember, I have grappled with the question of identity. As a child, I disliked my foreign surname, especially because it began with the letter “W”, which at the time did not even appear on the large alphabet chart hanging in my classroom. To make matters even more complicated, my mother — who also had an impossible-to-pronounce foreign surname — had chosen to give birth to me in a foreign city and to give me a name beginning with “K”. Of course, there are childhoods far more difficult than mine, which was, all things considered, a happy one. Still, the question of belonging remained. My parents’ origins did little to clarify matters, since they themselves were the children of parents from different nationalities.

To put it briefly, my four grandparents belonged to six different nations: Italian, Austrian, Liechtensteinian — if one can call it a nation — American, Danish and Hungarian, as two of them held dual citizenship. Had I grown up in Rome or Vienna, this mix of nationalities might have seemed unusual, but at least understandable. Instead, I spent my wonderful early years in Depressa, a village where nearly everyone is related to one another and where the people who spoke Italian could be counted on one hand. Inside our home, meanwhile, we communicated in Italian, French, German, English and Salentino dialect — none of them perfectly — in a kind of family language born out of this mixture of tongues. It reached the point where my father eventually decided to send us to boarding school in Florence “to wash our linens in the Arno,” borrowing Manzoni’s famous expression. Over time, I made peace with my cosmopolitan identity and came to see it as an antidote to the temptations of nationalism. Paradoxically, after living for several years in Germany and travelling around the world following film productions, I ended up making all my films in Puglia — more precisely in Salento — most of them in the Salentino dialect.

Why this obsession? I would rather answer with the words of Cesare Pavese: “You need a hometown, if only for the pleasure of leaving it behind. A hometown means never feeling alone, knowing that in its people, its trees, its soil, there is something of you that remains there waiting for you, even when you are away.”

What I have written would be of little interest were it not for the fact that European cultural diversity lies at the heart of the story of the two women in *VITA MIA*: both in terms of its richness and beauty, but also in terms of the prejudices we often hold towards those who are different from us — at least until we truly get to know them.”

Edoardo Winspeare

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Edoardo Winspeare was born in Austria in 1965, in Klagenfurt, but grew up in Salento, in the town of Tricase, more precisely in the hamlet of Depressa. After early experiences working as an assistant editor, on short film sets, on a first documentary, and beginning his university studies in Florence, he moved to Munich, where he graduated in directing from the University of Television and Film.

Following several short films and documentaries — some of them focused on Salento traditions and made between the late 1980s and early 1990s, such as *A Toilette's Short Story*, *Wo der Wolgastrom sich windet*, *San Paolo e la tarantola* and *L'ultimo Gattopardo* — he produced his first feature film, *Pizzicata*, in 1996. With this debut feature, which explored the historical and cultural world of tarantism, Winspeare immediately gained recognition both in Italy and abroad. The film was screened at dozens of festivals, including those in Berlin, San Francisco and San Sebastián, where it received a Special Mention. Around the same period, he temporarily stepped away from filmmaking to found the music group Officina Zoè, originally known as Zoe, together with a group of friends.

In 1999, he co-founded the production company Saietta Film with Gustavo Caputo. Over the following fifteen years, the company produced two feature films and around thirty documentaries and short films. In 2000, Winspeare directed *Living Blood (Sangue vivo)*, shot in Salentino dialect with Italian subtitles, which became his first major public success. The film won the Nuevos Directores Award at the San Sebastián International Film Festival, the Best Film Award at the Festival du Cinéma Méditerranéen de Montpellier, and became the first Italian film ever presented at the Sundance Film Festival. It also received three Grolle d'Oro awards for Best Film, Best Production and Best Original Score.

In 2003, he released *The Miracle (Il miracolo)*, which was nominated for a David di Donatello for Best Story and premiered at the Venice Film Festival, where it received two awards. The same year, he also directed the documentary *La festa che prende fuoco*, dedicated to the traditions surrounding the Feast of Saint Anthony Abbot in Novoli and the rituals of the Fòcara fire festival. His 2008 film *Galantuomini* explored the Salento bourgeoisie and the criminal organisation Sacra Corona Unita. The film starred Donatella Finocchiaro, Fabrizio Gifuni and Beppe Fiorello, and competed at the Rome International Film Festival in 2008, where Finocchiaro won the Marc'Aurelio d'Argento for Best Actress. The film also received nominations at both the David di Donatello and the Nastro d'Argento awards for Best Actress and Best Supporting Actor.

In 2009, he presented the medium-length film *Filia Solis* ("Daughter of the Sun", the poetic name used by Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor to describe the city of Brindisi), which he co-wrote with director Paola Crescenzo. That same year, he stepped in front of the camera as an actor in *Noi credevamo* by Mario Martone. The film, released in

cinemas in November 2010, also featured prominent Italian actors including Luca Zingaretti, Anna Bonaiuto, Francesca Inaudi and Luca Barbareschi. However, this was not Winspeare's first acting role: his on-screen debut had already taken place in 2003 *Bell'epoker* by Nico Cirasola. That same year, he also directed the documentary *Sotto il Celio*. His documentary *Azzurro* portrays the energy and passion of the teachers at Celio Azzurro, a multicultural nursery school in Rome. The film was presented at the Rome Film Fest in the "Alice nella Città" section. In January 2011, Edoardo Winspeare made his theatre directing debut with *La Parola Italia*, a theatrical celebration marking the 150th anniversary of Italian unification. The production opened the 42nd Opera Season of the Province of Lecce and was staged at the Teatro Politeama Greco in Lecce. In 2013, together with Carlo Bruni, he directed the medium-length film *L'anima attesa*, inspired by the life and legacy of Tonino Bello.

In 2014, *In grazia di Dio*, produced by Saietta Film and Alessandro Contessa, premiered at the 64th edition of the Berlin International Film Festival in the Panorama section. Like several of Winspeare's previous works, the film featured non-professional actors: the lead role was played by his wife, Celeste Casciaro, alongside her daughter Laura Licchetta, while the principal male role was played by Winspeare's longtime collaborator and producing partner Gustavo Caputo. The film received four nominations at the Nastro d'Argento awards and five at the Globo d'Oro awards, winning the Globo d'Oro Grand Jury Prize. It also received around thirty additional awards at festivals in Italy and internationally.

In 2017, he released *Life Together (La vita in comune)*, again produced by Saietta Film and Alessandro Contessa. The film premiered at the Venice Film Festival in the Orizzonti section, where it won the CICA Award. Between 1994 and 2025, Winspeare directed numerous documentaries, four short films, several commercials and four music videos.

In 2004, he became the leading promoter of Coppula Tisa, a non-profit association dedicated to restoring the beauty of the Salento landscape damaged by overdevelopment and illegal construction. Among the organisation's initiatives is the use of fundraising and financial resources to purchase architectural eyesores and environmentally harmful buildings located in areas of significant cultural and natural value, with the aim of demolishing them and restoring the landscape to its original integrity. Once rehabilitated, the land is donated to the Regione Puglia under the condition that it be permanently protected from future development.

Since 2021, Winspeare has also been a founding member of Sylva Foundation, an organisation dedicated to environmental regeneration through reforestation, with particular focus on the Apulian territory affected by the devastating decline of olive trees. Since 2020, he has served as the artistic director of Castello di Tutino in Tricase, a

cultural venue hosting concerts, literary and film festivals, theatre performances, cultural events and a renowned restaurant.

Filmography

2017 *Life Together*

2014 *By the Grace of God*

2009 *Under the Blue Sky*

2008 *Honourable Men (Galantuomini)*

2003 *The Miracle*

2000 *Living Blood*

1996 *Pizzicata*

CONTACT

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