

BERGAMO FILM MEETING

International Film Festival

43rd edition, March 8 - 16, 2025

Alice Nellis (Czech Republic) and Christian Petzold (Germany)
featured in Europe, Now!, the section of Bergamo Film Meeting
focussing on contemporary European cinema.

In its 43rd edition, the Europe, Now! section of the Bergamo Film Meeting, dedicated to contemporary European auteur cinema, presents the complete filmographies of two distinguished directors in its 43rd edition: **Alice Nellis**, screenwriter, director, and one of Czech cinema most representative figures (*Ene bene - Eeny Meeny*, 2000; *Tajnosti - Little Girl Blue*, 2007; *Buko*, 2022), and **Christian Petzold**, leading exponent of the "Berlin School" (*Barbara*, 2012; *Phoenix*, 2015; *Transit*, 2018; *Undine*, 2020; *Afire*, 2023). Both directors will attend the Festival.

The **Europe, Now!** includes a curated **selection of graduation films** from **CILECT-member European film schools** (in collaboration with the Luchino Visconti Civic School of Cinema of Milan) and by **Europe, Now! Film Industry Meetings** (March 12 - 13) the two-day networking platform for industry professional.

Alice Nellis (České Budějovice, Czech Republic - 1971)

A screenwriter and director, Alice Nellis stands as one of contemporary Czech cinema's most distinctive voices. Initially pursuing a musical career as a flautist, she later broadened her academic horizons by studying English and American literature. Her passion for film led her to Prague's prestigious FAMU (Film and Television Academy), from 1996 to 2001, where she specialised in screenwriting and dramaturgy.

During her studies, Nellis juggled numerous jobs, including web designer for the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, actress, teacher and translator. These diverse experiences enriched her creative vision and informed her narrative approach. She began her career creating with short films and television documentaries, establishing the foundation for her success Czech cinema.

Her feature debut, *Ene bene (Eeny Meeny, 2000)*, a tragicomedy exploring family relationships in a small Czech community during local elections, won the Best Screenplay award at the FAMU Festival and the bronze Rosa Camuna ex-aequo at the 18th edition of Bergamo Film Meeting. This success marked Nellis as an emerging voice in European cinema.

In 2002, she directed *Výlet (Some Secrets)*, a dark and incisive road movie portraying complex family dynamics through drama and comedy. The film earned her the Czech Lion Award for Best Screenplay and the New Directors Award at the San Sebastián International Film Festival.

Tajnosti (Little Girl Blue, 2007), marked another milestone in her career. The film, produced by Oscar-winning director Jan Sverák, explores the emotional journey of Julie, a translator navigating significant life changes while moving to a new house with her husband and teenage daughter. The story unfolds over a single day, earning widespread acclaim for its sensitivity and authenticity. The film garnered Nellis another Bronze Rosa Camuna at the 2008 Bergamo Film Meeting.

Her subsequent works continued to explore human relationships *Mamas & Papas (2010)*, examined parenthood's complexities, *Perfect Days – I zeny maji sve dny (Perfect Days, 2011)*, based on Liz Lochhead's play, depicted an emancipated woman discovering her maternal instinct; and *Revival (2013)*, showcased her versatility through the story of a reuniting rock band.

Nellis's filmography expanded with *Andelé vsedního dne* (*Angels*, 2014), adapted from Michal Viewegh's bestseller about four angels confronting human fragility, and *Adopce: Konkurs na rodice* (*Adoption*, 2014), a time-lapse documentary following couples through their adoption journeys. In 2015, Božena Němcová's fairy tale, *Sedmero krkavců* (*The Seven Ravens*), demonstrating her ability to blend magical realism with universal themes. Her work in television includes the HBO drama series *Pustina* (*Wasteland*, 2016), co-written with Ivan Zachariaš, a dark and gripping story set in a mining community in the Czech Republic.

In 2022 she directed *Buko*, a delicate comedy about affection and change: with the help of friends and neighbours, recently widowed Jarmila builds a new home for her horse Buko and a new life for herself. The film confirms Alice Nellis' ability to craft engaging and meaningful stories. That same year she also completed the documentary *Semyon Bychkov*, an intimate portrait of the talented and often controversial conductor of the Czech Philharmonic.

In 2024 she returned to TV co-writing and co-directing with Jiří Havelka the miniseries *Náhradníci* (*Surrogates*), again focusing on the theme of parenthood.

Music plays a central role throughout Nellis's work, serving as a fundamental tool for conveying complex emotions and enhancing dramatic impact. Beyond cinema, she maintains an active presence in theater and commercial production and has published short stories in various anthologies.

Alice Nellis will be in Bergamo on March 12 and 13.

In collaboration with the Czech Center of Milan.

Titles featured in the retrospective

Buko (2022)

Sedmero krkavcu (*The Seven Ravens*, 2015)

Adopce: Konkurs na rodice (*Adoption*, doc., 2014)

Andelé vsedního dne (*Angels*, 2014)

Revival (2013)

Perfect Days – I zeny maji sve dny (2011)

Mamas & Papas (2010)

Tajnosti (*Little Girl Blue*, 2007)

Výlet (*Some Secrets*, 2002)

Ene well (*Eeny Meeny*, 2000)

Christian Petzold (Hilden, Germany - 1960)

Born to East German emigrants and raised in the small town of Haan, Christian Petzold moved to Berlin in 1981. There, from 1988 to 1994, he studied at the Deutsche Film - und Fernsehakademie Berlin (DFFB), the Academy of Film and Television. These years coincided with the *Wende* (turning point), the period of profound transformation following the Berlin Wall's fall and German reunification. As a student, Petzold attempted to capture this momentous change in his early documentary shorts, which, though unsuccessful by his own admission, provided narrative material for his next two decades of work.

During his DFFB years, Petzold formed a crucial partnership with instructor Harun Farocki (1944-2014), whose influence as a filmmaker, artist, and intellectual helped shape Petzold's approach to developing ideas and scripts. Transitioning from documentaries, Petzold graduated with *Pilotinnen* (*Pilots*, 1995), a TV feature loosely based on Hitchcock's *The 39 Club* (1935). This unconventional thriller introduced a recurring theme in his early work: women struggling in post-reunification Germany. The film's success of *Pilotinnen* led to *Cuba libre* (1996), which transplanted the noir classic *Detour* (1945) by Edgar G. Ulmer from the desolate roads of post-war America to the squalor of 1990s. His third television film, *The Beischlafdiebin* (*The Sex Thief*, 1998) is also based on a noir plot.

Petzold developed a distinctive style rich in literary and cinematic references. His films, grounded in reality yet steeped in history, reinvent genres while exploring connections between Germany's turbulent past and uncertain present.

His big screen debut, *Die innere Sicherheit* (*The State I Am In*, 2000), following former RAF terrorists and their teenage daughter, began his "Ghost Trilogy" and earned the German Critics' Prize. This trilogy continued with *Gespenster* (*Ghosts*, 2005) and *Yella* (2007), both dealing directly with the trauma of post-unification Germany and establishing him as a leading figure of the "Berlin School."

The 2001 TV film *Toter Mann* (*Something to Remind Me*) marked the first of his many collaborations with the then-unknown actress Nina Hoss and also his first variation on Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, whose plot he takes up with the story of a lawyer and a lonely blonde woman, and of an attraction that turns into obsession. *Wolfsburg* (2003), starring Nina Hoss, starring Hoss, won the FIPRESCI Prize at the Berlinale.

Gespenster (Ghosts), the second chapter of the "Ghost Trilogy" portraying two young women living on the margins, earned Petzold his second German Critics' Award. The third instalment, *Yella* (2007), inspired by Herk Harvey's horror film *Carnival of Souls* (1962), won Hoss the Silver Bear for best performance. Their collaboration continued in *Jerichow* (2008); presented at the 65th Venice Film Festival, a reimagining of *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, where a veteran of the war in Afghanistan begins a relationship with a married woman.

International recognition for both Petzold and Hoss peaked with *Barbara* (2012, Silver Bear for Best Direction). Set in the 1980 GDR, the film is a crossover between thriller and spy story, and kicks off a new trilogy, "Love in Times of Oppressive Systems". A FIPRESCI award winner at San Sebastian, the second instalment *Phoenix* (2015) is a noir set in Germany after the end of World War II, where Nina Hoss is a concentration camp survivor forced to undergo facial reconstruction surgery. Her newfound husband does not recognize her but slowly tries to transform her into the wife he remembers. Again, the references to *Vertigo* are clear, but the atmosphere and the staging also show clear references to melodrama and Fassbinder.

The trilogy ends with *Transit* (2018), a free adaptation of the novel of the same name by Anna Seghers. It's the story of a political refugee who, after fleeing from Paris during the Nazi occupation, begins a relationship with the widow of a writer dead by suicide of whom he assumes the identity. This time, the female leading role is entrusted to Paula Beer, who will also take part in Petzold's later films.

In 2020, the "Trilogy of the Elements" opens with *Undine*, once again presented in competition at the Berlinale. The film is a reworking of the mythological figure of Ondina, an intense love story built on the symbolic meaning of water. In the second chapter, *Roter Himmel (Afire)*, 2023, Grand Jury Prize in Berlin, a fiery sky accompanies the sentimental education of a group of young people in a large house in the middle of the woods near the sea, at the height of summer. The protagonist is a writer struggling with his second novel and forced to come to terms with himself, love and his own arrogance.

Christian Petzold is currently finishing his new film *Miroirs No. 3* which will not be part of the "Elements Trilogy", but will once again star Paula Beer in the role of a young pianist who loses her boyfriend in a tragic car accident.

Christian Petzold will be in Bergamo on March 8th and 9th.

In collaboration with Goethe-Institut Mailand and The Match Factory.

Titles featured in the retrospective

Süden (South), short, 1990)

Ostwärts (1991, short, 24')

Das warme Geld (The Warm Money), short 1992)

Pilotinnen (Pilots), 1995)

Cuba Libre (1996)

Die Beischlafdiebin (The Sex Thief), 1998)

Die innere Sicherheit (The State I Am In), 2000)

Toter Mann (Something to Remind Me), 2001)

Wolfsburg (2003)

Gespenster (Ghosts), 2005)

Yella (2007)

Jerichow (2008)

Barbara (2012)

Phoenix (2015)

Transit (2018)

Undine (2020)

Roter Himmel (Afire), 2023)

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