

# UNDER INFLUENCE



WRITTEN, DIRECTED & PRODUCED BY SIDNEY LEONI STARRING HALLA ÓLAFSDÓTTIR, CHRISTINE DE SMEDT, STEVEN WENDT, MARIANA MY SUIKKANEN GOMES  
MUSIC BY JONATHAN SALDANHA CINEMATOGRAPHY HOANG-SON DOAN EDITED BY DENIS LEBORGNE SOUND EDITING RAPHAËL HÉNARD  
COSTUME DESIGN MARIE DAVIN EXECUTIVE PRODUCTION HIROS



# SIDNEY LEONI

## UNDER INFLUENCE

***Under Influence* dépeint le cheminement mystérieux et psychotique de l'actrice Julia Gordon, qui tente frénétiquement de faire de son imaginaire un monde en rupture avec son quotidien.**

Frustrée par son rôle dans une production intitulée *Being Kate Winslet*, elle trouve du réconfort dans l'interprétation de personnages charismatiques du cinéma, qui l'envahissent progressivement.

*Under Influence* est un dédale fait d'événements réels et naturalistes, de télescopages entre la fiction et la réalité, de situations imaginaires et fantaisistes, de désirs et de fantasmes qui tourbillonnent dans l'esprit de l'actrice, qui nous révèle ses rêves.

Un voyage visuel, auditif et physique sur l'identité et le cinéma à ne manquer sous aucun prétexte.

## SCREENINGS

01 > 03.10.2015	Dansens Hus, Stockholm (SE) - Screening test -
17.03.2016	Inkonst, Malmö (SE)
25 > 26.03.2016	Beursschouwburg, Bruxelles (BE) - Première belge -
28.04.2016	Centre Culturel Jacques Franck, Bruxelles (BE)
24.08.2016	Reykjavik Dance Festival, Reykjavik (IS)
26 > 27.08.2016	Tanz im August (HAU Hebbel am Ufer), Berlin (DE)
06.10.2016	Kunstencentrum Buda, Courtrai (BE)

## WALK & TALK

Walk & Talk de Sidney Leoni (30') est une lecture performance dans laquelle langage et mouvement sont traités comme formes égalitaires et complémentaires d'expression, et à partir desquelles les inspirations, aspirations et travaux multidisciplinaires de l'artiste sont mises en exergue.

# CREDITS

**Ecrit, réalisé & produit par:** Sidney Leoni  
**Avec:** Halla Ólafsdóttir, Christine de Smedt, Steven Wendt, Mariana My Suikkanen Gomes, Alexandra Cismondi, Elias Girod, Sidney Leoni, Zoë Poluch, Manon Santkin  
**Cinématographie:** Hoang-Son Doan  
**Musique:** Jonathan Uliel Saldanha  
**Costumes:** Marie Davin  
**Montage image:** Denis Leborgne  
**Montage et mixage son:** Raphaël Hénard  
**Théâtre d'ombres chinoises:** Steven Wendt  
**Etalonnage:** Paul Millot, Cobalt Films  
**Production exécutive:** Hiros  
**Assistants à la production:** Ruben Desiere, Estelle Gautier, Luis Miguel Félix, Adrien Monfleur, Kevin Trappeniers  
**1er assistant caméra:** Alexandre Cabanne  
**2ème premiers assistants caméra:** Charlotte Marchal, Ada Detraz  
**Machiniste:** Brendan Senden, Pierre Schoenstein  
**1er assistant son:** Lucas Lebart  
**2ème assistant son:** Alban Cayrol  
**Superviseur du script:** Estelle Gautier  
**Décorateur:** Sidney Leoni  
**Haute couture:** *Jadis Collection* par Loic Barbarroux  
**Costumiers:** Sidney Leoni, Marine Vanhaesendonck  
**Coiffure & maquillage:** The cast, Marie Davin, Sidney Leoni  
**Peintre:** René Leoni  
**Photographe de plateau:** Thomas Cartron  
**Casting additionnel:** Estelle Gautier, Emma Kim Hagdahl, Michael Helland, Miles Madison, Ula Sickle  
**Figurants:** Helga Baert, Amandine Bigot, Billy Bultheel, Alexandre Cabanne, Thomas Cartron, Jenthe Coenen, Ludwig Dieleman, Fanny Evers, François Geslin, Marie Gob, Julie Gouju, Arya Honarmand, Surya Ibrahim, Louise Lanckmans, Alice Lapalu, Johan Leclercq, Bart De Leeuw, Martin Lervik, Carlos Lopez, Tamara Maes, Enad Marouf, Mara Mathyssens, Aïda Merghoub, Paul De Mont, Alex Pauwels, Matthieu Peyrand, Rudy Rillaerts, Anika Ruisch, Coline & Laurent Toulouse, Matthieu Triolet, Evelien Van De Velde.  
**Directeur technique pour projection:** Akim Troch  
**Sous-titres français:** Stéphanie Gauthier  
**Caméra, lentilles et équipement:** BFC Rental, Eye Lite, Key Grip Systems  
**Équipement son:** AD HOC Sound Services  
**Mixage son fait à:** DojoMix Studio  
**Restauration:** A CHACUN SA MADELEINE  
**Soutien administratif:** Interim Kultur (Stockholm)  
**Soutenu par:** Montévideo centre de créations contemporaines (Marseille), Centre Culturel Jacques Franck (Bruxelles), U.N.I.A.R.T.S. Université des Arts de Stockholm, PACT Zollverein (Essen)  
**Co-productions:** Beursschouwburg (Brussels), Dansens Hus (Stockholm), Kunstencentrum Buda (Kortrijk)  
**Avec le soutien financier de:** la Communauté flamande, la ville de Stockholm, le Conseil Suédois des Arts  
**Remerciements:** Abbaye de Villers, Brasserie Du Gourmet, la ville de Bruxelles, Commune de Forest, Foodmaker, Gare de Genval, Gîte Du Chenêlet, KVS, Narafi, Ecole des Arts Luca, OR, bar Potemkine, Scouts et Guides de Sint-Hubert LDK, Sipwell, Taxis Verts, Vedett.  
**Durée:** 74 min.

# DANS LA PRESSE

## ABC – SIDNEY LEONI

agendamagazine.be – 25 > 31.03.2016

Ive Stevenheydens

**Choreographer, dancer, and performance artist Sidney Leoni's feature-length film *Under Influence* premières this week at the Beursschouwburg. This is his ABC.**

“I grew up in the south of France and at a young age, I decided to take ballet lessons at the Toulon opera. I was able to build a theoretical foundation thanks to my studies in dance, music, theatre, and ethnology of the arts at the university of Nice. Afterwards I did research into choreography as part of the Master's programme at DOCH in Stockholm. Despite the good fortune of having completed several arts programmes, and especially surrounded by talented artists, I do primarily consider myself an autodidact with a great sense of **ADVENTURE**. That is also true of this film project. The ‘dynamite acting’ of Gena Rowlands in John Cassavetes's *Opening Night* and Elizabeth Taylor in Mike Nichols's *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf* or the last seconds of darkness in Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* made me eager to start working on this project. I don't really want to be identified as a dancer, choreographer, or filmmaker. Again, autodidact fits me best.”

“I travel often, and I really enjoy commuting between here and Stockholm. But there is nowhere in the world that you have the same cultural freedom and possibilities as in Belgium and Brussels. The number of artists, spaces, and enthusiastic creative people is enormous here. Unfortunately, I don't think we cherish that enough. Friends and colleagues – cinematographer Doan Hoang-son, performer Manon Santkin, choreographer Mette Ingvartsen, Helga Baert from the Hiros production house – convinced me to move to Brussels. Here I immediately found people and institutions that were willing to help and support me with this ambitious film project, for example Buda in Kortrijk, the Beursschouwburg, and Centre Culturel Jacques Franck in Brussels. But this **BIOTOPE** is so fragile, and with the latest cuts to subsidies, I'm afraid that it will not emerge unscathed. Let us hope that the arts scene in Brussels continues to be this full and rich for many years to come!”

“My research and productions often tend to be immersive, sensorial, and experience-oriented. Over the last few years, I have worked in total darkness so as to submerge the audience in soundscapes and let them experience wind circulation, temperature changes, vibrations, and smells. The transition from choreography to **CINEMA** was thus small and logical. Making the film has allowed me to explore further the relationship between images, sounds, music, dramaturgy, and dance. Film opens a space between reality and dreams that you can fill up freely as a director. Writing and making this film did not necessarily follow a logical and linear pattern. That is why the work especially attempts to move people, rather than presenting a structured narrative. Instead of asking the old question: ‘What is it?’, the film seeks to explore the question: ‘What does it do?’ Of course, it is up to the viewers to judge whether or not we have succeeded in this goal.”

## TANZ IM AUGUST: WEEKEND IN REVIEW

Exberliner - 30.08.2016

Nina Branner

When I let myself collapse in the (not so soft) seat at the HAU1, I'm ready to be entertained by Sidney Leoni's feature film *Under Influence*. I had liked the trailer on the festival's website and was looking forward to revelling in Leoni's dreamy universe. But shame on me for demoting the film genre to a somehow less demanding form of art.

When I met Leoni for an interview the following day, he explained to me the way he's worked on the film: The scenes had for the most part - visually - already existed in his head. Like little glowing babies waiting to be conceived. He'd relied on the presence of his actors rather than on a narrative. He wanted his main character, Julia Gordon, to always be in motion - and the spectators likewise - never in the know about what happens next.

All of which is to say, that's probably the way you should watch *Under Influence* - like a dance. Forget about making sense of the many (!) scenes that turn and twist among each other, more similar to an ecstatic body improvisation than a tightly choreographed performance piece. At times it is very confusing.

Here's what worked for me: Halla Ólafsdóttir and Christine de Smedt are delightfully present and watchable as the psychotic actress and her frustrated director - impressive because neither of them have acted in a film before. The film is visually beautiful with its many close-ups, delicate range of colors and theatrical expression, and the conciliatory yet distressing music score by Jonathan Uliel Saldanha accompanies the scenes elegantly. The mise en abyme principle in which Julia Gordon confuses herself with the actress Kate Winslet is original and the *Titanic* parody is funny.

# BACK TO THE BODY

## INTERVIEW WITH SIDNEY LEONI

Tanz im August Blog - 28.08.2016

Nina Branner

Choreographer Sidney Leoni's first feature film *Under Influence* is like a dance: An eternally evolving movement which, when it's good, keeps its characters and the audience on their toes in the search for truth. Nina Branner met him for a talk about female idols, Scandinavian darkness and the return to basic, human sensations.

### **You've been working as a dancer and choreographer for over ten years. Why did you want to make a film?**

Already when I was a teenager I developed an intimate relation to cinema and films like 'Last year at Marienbad' and 'Opening night' - and to actresses too. My readings are often on cinema too. Cinema and my dance education in an opera house have fed my imagination all these years, and the medium was a way to materialize all that I have stored and puzzled in my head. Another reason I went for it is that, for years now, I have been making performance projects which are taking place in total darkness, and where I orchestrate the media of sound, light, body, smell or temperature. Making films was somehow natural and logical, an extension of my multidisciplinary artistic endowment.

### **What is your fascination with darkness about?**

It started when I moved to Stockholm, where darkness is literally very present. But it also has to do with my personality: I'm quite a solitary person, though I am often with friends and working with large group of artists. During my first performance project, *Undertone*, I was very engaged in reading the French theorist and poet Georges Bataille, who has written a series of erotic poems, often mentioning the holes in our body. Holes, that are tunnels to the unknown - to the darkness. That inspired me. For me darkness is an invitation to freedom: freedom of projection, of imagination and interpretation. Darkness also offers an intensification of experiencing. In darkness a very little sound can take an incongruous proportion. In a performative context, but also in the real world, I see in darkness a promise of a greater kind of sensibility, physicality and interactivity between people beyond the normative rules of sex, gender, race and class. The goal of my work is to challenge how we interact with each other. In our modern and technological world, we tend to forget to rely on our sensory capacities to interact and connect with one another.

**What is the difference between choreographing a dance performance and directing a film?**

The main difference was in how to work with my dance colleagues. It was a big challenge for me to find the right terminology, the right way to address them and to give them clear instructions. During the first period of shoot, I was saying things like “can you look more sad” or “show her that you are in love.” Very quickly it became clear that it wasn’t the right way for me to conduct. It was way too confusing for the actors. After that, I started to only give them physical instructions, saying things like “this scene will be totally static. Stand still as long as you can. If you can’t hold it any longer, say cut”.

**Which I suppose is the way you work as a dance choreographer...**

To a certain extent yes. But there is a completely different atmosphere and work rhythm when working in a dancing studio or in a theater. The screenplay for the film is quite thin because 75 % of the film isn’t verbal, and only based on short descriptions of character’s physicalities and actions. On top of that, many dialogues in the film repeat themselves again and again with different kinds of variations and transitions - much like a dance. That’s the reason it was so evident for me to work with some of my talented friends and performers, rather than with professional actors.

**In Under Influence, the main character stars as Kate Winslet in a movie and confuses herself with her in a psychotic journey towards independence. How did you get this idea?**

I have idealized women like Kate Winslet, Jodie Foster, Gena Rowlands - actresses, but also composers like Nina Simone, who have taken on strong roles. So my desire to portray women who aren’t afraid to challenge people and know what they want came rather intuitively. I came up with this plot - an actress who turns into other actresses - because it allowed me to basically never respect a linear way of telling the story. Rather than having the actions in the film going from a point A to a point B, I chose most of the times to not have any point B. And also to start with a point A that is as obscure as point B. I wanted to keep things as unpredictable as possible. Through the film, the signs of what belongs to the real world and to the main character’s fantasy - like for instance when the film director shouts ‘cut’ - gets more and more blurry. I hope that will bring the spectators to stop wondering what’s real and what’s imaginary. I want to put these two things on the same level and show how our imagination can invade the real world, influence our actions and vice versa.

# EVERYBODY'S SPECTACULAR UNDER INFLUENCE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF SIDNEY LEONI

Sóley Frostadóttir

What just happened? I stepped out from the screening of Sidney Leoni's *Under Influence* and could by no means put what I just saw into words. It took quite a while to understand the film and as a matter of fact I am still trying to figure it out. Even so, the sensation that stayed with me was especially clear, as if I knew exactly what had just happened. It reminded me of waking up from a surrealistic dream. The movie is about Julia, an actress (Halla Ólafsdóttir) that plays the role of Rose acting on set in *Being Kate Winslet* (Life after Titanic). Julia, acting Rose, finds herself in a struggle and tries to change the character. She imagines different scenes, becomes another person and reacts quite inexplicably, so that it was impossible to keep track. I am certain that it is precisely that which succeeded so well. Because of this I had to surrender and let myself follow. I could only rely on my own sensation. Julia's imagination was an interesting view on our perception of reality. The imagined world was somewhat more surreal but just as crisp. It was surprisingly easy to relate to Julia, Rose, April (Halla), perhaps because she is not one but three characters. Most of us are more than just one character and we all have different roles. We jump from being a student, to parenthood, to being a son or daughter.

(...)

Julia in *Under Influence* appears to lose control of her situation and goes back and forth between fiction and reality. It's up to the audience to make a distinction between the two. Leoni works with the sensations and experience of the audience. He brings the audience into a vision of a dream only to grip them back to reality with a shot of Julia turning against the director on set. There is a very thin line between the fictional and the real in the film.

(...)

Julia attempts to kill the crazy woman within her but realizes that it is impossible. We all have many roles to play and even though it becomes difficult when they clash, it is in no way easier to erase parts of ourselves. We are all of these characters. Everybody's spectacular. Everybody's remarkable, characters of many layers, each with a role of its own. The festival seems to have chosen pieces that introduce a separate reality, whether it is a person revealing other sides of herself or whether we get to peek into a parallel world.





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## BIOGRAPHIES

### SIDNEY LEONI

° 1984, vit et travaille à Bruxelles & Stockholm

Sidney travaille en tant que chorégraphe, performeur et réalisateur. Ses recherches explorent le champ du théâtre et du cinéma immersifs et expérientiels, au sein duquel il s'intéresse particulièrement aux possibilités de perception sensorielle du public. Dans ses dernières chorégraphies - *Undertone* (2010) et *Hertz* (2013) - l'espace théâtral est plongé partiellement ou entièrement dans la pénombre, et un ensemble de variations sensorielles - comme des paysages sonores en son surround, de la musique live, des odeurs, des tremblements, des courants d'air et des changements de température - sont générées en corrélation avec des situations performatives de rencontre et de dépendance mutuelle entre un groupe de performeurs, de musiciens et le public.

Sidney insiste à obscurcir les différents espaces de présentation de son travail (théâtre, black box, cinéma), car il voit dans l'obscurité une immense promesse - une promesse d'un différent type de sociabilité et de sensibilité entre les humains.

En tant que performeur, Sidney a participé aux projets de Mette Ingvarstsen - *Giant City* (2009) et *The Artificial Nature Project* (2012) - d'Andros Zins-Browne - *The Host* (2010) et *Welcome to the Jungle* (2012), et de Stina Nyberg - *Splendour* (2015).



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