



**venezia 63**  
competition

*Coop99*

*presents*

# FALLING

a film from Barbara Albert

Austria / 2006 / 85 Min / Color / 35mm

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## SYNOPSIS

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Five women in their early thirties meet for the first time in fourteen years when they return to their small hometown to attend the funeral of their favorite teacher. The reunion unexpectedly continues through the night and the following day, taking them on a journey to the past, present, and future, in which old wounds are reopened, but friendships are also rediscovered. Have these women's dreams simply gotten lost over the years or is there a place in their lives for new utopias?

## SCREENWRITER/DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

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### *Why this story?*

I wrote FALLING for five actresses from my generation, nearly all of whom have strongly influenced Austrian cinema over the past five years. I have known these women for 7-10 years and despite this, or maybe precisely because of this, I felt I wanted to work on a project with them.

This as well as the notion that my next project was to be a strongly actor/actress-oriented film that would be relatively uncomplicated to make, were what gave rise to FALLING – an examination of a given situation based on a very straightforward plot. The focus is shifted to identifying with the characters, nevertheless I didn't want to completely forgo playful elements, time warps and associations.

Nevertheless, the story should live from the dialogue and the acting – the emotional aspect and the atmosphere were more important to me than the plot, which unfolds on a superficial level. It is what lies below the surface and is gradually being revealed that creates the tension and suspense.

I approached each character with different demands. Nina, for instance, was to play a character that at first glance didn't seem to fit the picture we have of her; Kathrin's and Birgit's characters also add new facets to the actresses' familiar roles. Having worked with Ursula Strauss in FREE RADICALS, I felt I needed to give her emotional side more space to unfold and to develop the part of her I had already come to know. I met Gabriela Hegedüs working on a project in a women's prison. She got so close to the prisoners as part of a half-year acting workshop that, I think, she had the best experience for the role of NICOLE.

### *The Theme of the Film.*

#### *The Present as a Mixture of Memory and Yearning.*

I would call the theme of the film the search for paradise lost; more simply put, the notion of each character's vision, utopia, or concept of life. It's about waking up to reality after the old visions have failed to materialize. In the meantime probably some of those dreams have been forgotten, buried, or just repressed, and the question is whether this necessarily implies resignation.

For most of the characters the end of the story means embarking on a new chapter in life, which may not be able to live up to the old dreams but at least won't betray them.

To me, our need to search for concepts of life and utopias can be seen most clearly in the classroom scene at the end of the film, where Brigitte conducts a political discussion with her students: what does it mean to be critical of the system? Does resistance exist? What are the concepts we want to/can/should live by?

Like with the time warp a few moments earlier that brings us full circle when Carmen runs into a not-dead-after-all Ronnie on the railway platform, here, too, the question at the end of the film leads us back to our original questions.

## CHARACTERS/CAST

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*NINA, currently unemployed and 7 months pregnant*

### **Nina PROLL**

Nina Proll was born in Vienna in 1974, grew up in Waldviertel (Lower Austria), and went back to Vienna as a teenager, where she took her first acting classes at the age of sixteen. An all-round artistic and linguistic talent, Nina Proll studied at the Vienna Musical School of the Vereinigten Bühnen Wien and soon afterwards started her singing and dancing career (JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR, SWEET CHARITY, CABARET, KISS ME KATE). As a singer she has released five CDs to date; she went on tour in 2006 with her most recent CD, NINA PROLL LIVE.

The talented all-rounder is just as much a sought-after film star as she is a musical and theater performer. The list of films she has played in include the feature film productions HINTERHOLZ 8 (dir: Harald Sicheritz), NORTHERN SKIRTS (dir: Barbara Albert), IKARUS (dir: Bernhard Weirather), ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BRIDGE (dir: Hu Mei), AMEN (dir: Costa Gavras), and FALLING (dir: Barbara Albert). In 1999 Nina Proll received the Marcello Mastroianni Award at the Venice Film Festival and was named 'European Shooting Star' at the Berlinale. In 2005 she was nominated for the Austrian 'Romy.'

*BRIGITTE, teaches German and history*

### **Birgit MINICHMAYR**

Born as the daughter of an insurance salesman and a homeopath in Linz/Pasching (Upper Austria) in 1977. Originally she wanted to become a singer and dancer but opted for acting. She received her training at the famous Max Reinhardt Seminar, where Klaus Maria Brandauer was an important teacher to her. While she was still going to school, she began acting at the Burgtheater in Vienna, where from 1999 onward she played a number of important roles (in plays by Schnitzler, Albee, Nestroy, Shakespeare, Sophokles, Grillparzer, among others) before Frank Castorf brought her to the Volksbühne Berlin in 2005. She has been a member of the ensemble ever since.

In addition to her highly acclaimed stage career, Birgit Minichmayr is also a sought-after cinema and television actress, having played in the made-for-TV productions BÖSES BLUT (Tatort episode written by Felix Mitterer), SPIEL IM MORGENGRAUEN (dir: Götz Spielmann), and KRONPRINZ RUDOLF (dir: Robert Dornhelm), among others. Her feature film roles include HOTEL (dir: Jessica Hausner), THE DOWNFALL (dir: Oliver Hirschbiegel), YOU BET YOUR LIFE (dir: Antonin Svoboda), PERFUME: THE STORY OF A MURDERER (dir: Tom Tykwer), and FALLING by Barbara Albert.

*ALEX, works at an unemployment office*

### **Ursula STRAUSS**

Born in Melk (Lower Austria) in 1974, studied acting at the Volkstheater, Vienna, and has appeared in countless roles on well-known stages in Vienna, e.g. Theater in der Josefstadt, Ensembletheater, Theater in der Drachengasse, and Volkstheater. Her first movie role was in the social drama WHITE CHERRIES (dir: Leopold Lummerstorfer).

Since then, Ursula Strauss has taken on more and more film roles, both for the big screen and television. Her roles in TV productions include KOMMISSAR REX, SOKO KITZBÜHEL, TRAUTMANN (dir: Thomas Roth), and most recently WEIHNACHTSHUNDE (dir: Lenard Krawinkel).

She has also played larger parts in feature films including FREE RADICALS (dir: Barbara Albert), CRASH TEST DUMMIES (dir: Jörg Kalt), KOTSCH (dir: Helmut Köpping), and FALLING, directed by Barbara Albert.

*CARMEN, actress*

### **Kathrin RESETARITS**

Kathrin Resetarits was born in Vienna in 1973 as the daughter of the Austrian stand-up comedian Lukas Resetarits, and spent her childhood in Bisamberg (Lower Austria). Before she began studying film directing at the Vienna Film Academy, she studied journalism, philosophy, and drama. As an actress, her first role was in the short film SONNENFLECKEN by Barbara Albert, later she played in the feature films RICHTUNG ZUKUNFT DURCH DIE NACHT (dir: Jörg Kalt), IKARUS (dir: Bernhard Weirather), CRASH TEST DUMMIES (dir: Jörg Kalt), and in Barbara Albert's FREE RADICALS and FALLING. In 2006 Kathrin Resetarits was named 'European Shooting Star' at the Berlinale.

Resetarits has directed several short films and documentaries, such as ICH BIN ICH, LA PALOMA, STRANGERS, for which she has received several international awards. She has worked with Michael Haneke as artistic assistant on THE PIANO TEACHER, THE TIME OF THE WOLF, and HIDDEN, and also co-writes her father's comedy routines. Kathrin Resetarits has published prose in the literature journal 'Kolik' on the Internet website 'die flut' and in various newspapers and anthologies.

*NICOLE, out of prison on temporary leave*

### **Gabriela HEGEDÜS**

Gabriela Hegedüs was born in Vienna in 1975 and grew up in Deutschwagram (Lower Austria), where she started acting in grade school. After graduating from high school, she first studied drama and later switched to an acting school in Vienna. After graduating, she received a role at the Volkstheater in Vienna for the production DIE VÖGEL in 2002, followed by a part in PARSIFAL for the Sommerspiele Melk, and a leading role in the Karl F. Kratzl adaptation LA STRADA - UND HATTEN EINANDER SO LIEB (dir: Michael Kreihsl).

In addition, Gabriela Hegedüs also holds acting workshops and gives poetry readings of works by contemporary authors. Serving as production manager and acting coach, she put on the play PARADISE INN in 2003, for which she worked closely with the female inmates of an Austrian prison. She spontaneously called Barbara Albert and offered her the job of director, and that was the beginning of the collaboration between her and Barbara Albert. The part of Nicole in FALLING is Gabriela Hegedüs' first film role.

*DAPHNE, 12 years old, Nicole's daughter*

### **Ina Strnad**

Before playing DAPHNE in FALLING, Ina Strnad participated in Michael Haneke's WOLFSZEIT (THE TIME OF THE WOLF). Still visiting the gymnasium, Ina doesn't know yet, if she wants to become an actress later. DAPHNE was her first bigger role in a film.

## BARBARA ALBERT, director/writer

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BARBARA ALBERT was born in Vienna in 1970. She studied drama, German philology, and journalism before starting her directing and screenwriting studies at the Vienna Film Academy in 1991. She worked as assistant director, script/continuity and acted in several films (e.g. MEMORY OF THE UNKNOWN, dir: Natalie Alonso Casale, CRASH TEST DUMMIES, dir: Jörg Kalt). Her internationally successful shorts were followed by her first feature film NORTHERN SKIRTS, which was screened at the Venice Film Festival in 1999 and was awarded the Marcello Mastroianni prize for Nina Proll as best upcoming actress. The same year she founded the production company coop99 together with Martin Gschlacht, Jessica Hausner, and Antonin Svoboda. Her second feature film FREE RADICALS (Locarno 2003) and also FALLING were produced by coop99. Barbara co-wrote GRBAVICA (Golden Bear Berlinale 2006), SLUMMING (in competition Berlinale 2006), DAS FRÄULEIN (2006), and STRUGGLE (Cannes 2003). She also wrote the script for the feature film AUSWEGE (dir: Nina Kusturica). Together with Ulrich Seidl and Michael Glawogger she worked on the documentary feature STATE OF THE NATION (Locarno 2002). Other credits as a director include the episode film SLIDIN' – BRIGHT AND SHINY WORLD and the documentary SOMEWHERE ELSE. As a producer Barbara has also been responsible for many successful projects undertaken by coop99.

### FILMOGRAPHY

#### FILMS (Writer/Director)

##### **FALLING (FALLEN)** (feature film, 2006)

Biennale di Venezia 2006, in competition

##### **MARS** (short-film, 2004)

Austrian contribution für **VISIONS OF EUROPE** – 25 short-films by 25 European directors

Locarno Int. Film Festival 2004

Copenhagen Int. Film Festival 2004

##### **FREE RADICALS (BÖSE ZELLEN)** (feature film, 2003)

Locarno Int. Film Festival 2003, in competition

Toronto Int. Film Festival 2003

New York Film Festival 2003

London Int. Film Festival 2003

Stockholm Int. Film Festival 2003

Thessaloniki Int. Film Festival 2003, in competition

##### **STATE OF A NATION (ZUR LAGE)** (documentary, 2002)

Together with Michael Glawogger, Ulrich Seidl and Michael Sturminger

Diagonale – Austrian Filmfestival 2002

##### **NORTHERN SKIRT (NORDRAND)** (feature film, 1999)

Biennale di Venezia 1999, in competition - Marcello Mastroianni prize for Nina Proll: best upcoming actress

Viennale 1999 - Wiener Filmpreis, prize of the FIPRESCI-Jury

Int. Stockholm Film Festival - Best First Feature Film

Max-Ophüls-Film-Festival Saarbrücken 2000 - Förderungspreis & Best Screenplay

##### **SLIDIN'–BRIGHT AND SHINY WORLD (SLIDIN'–ALLES BUNT UND WUNDERBAR)**(feature film, 1998) Episode **TAGADA**, 30 min

Rotterdam Int. Film Festival 1999, Tiger Award competition

##### **SONNENFLECKEN** (short-film, 1998)

Win Femme Film Festival, Los Angeles 1999 - Best Short-Film

##### **SOMEWHERE ELSE** (documentary, 1997)

Festival of Human Rights, Leipzig 1998

**DIE FRUCHT DEINES LEIBES** (short-film, 1996)

Int. Filmfestival Locarno 1997 - Leopard of Tomorrow, Prix SSR  
Rencontres Int. Henri Langlois Festival du Film, Poitiers - Le Prix Spécial du Jury  
Krakow Int. Short Film Festival - The Jury's Diploma of Honour  
31st Humboldt Int. Film Festival, Arcata '98 - Best Film of the Festival, Best International Film

**NACHTSCHWALBEN** (short-film, 1993)

Max-Ophüls-Film-Festival Saarbrücken 1994 – Best Short-Film

**FILMS** (Co-Writer)

**GRBAVICA** by Jasmila Zbanic

Berlinale 2006 – Golden Bear Best Film

**SLUMMING** by Michael Glawogger

Berlinale 2006, in competition

**DAS FRÄULEIN** by Andrea Staka

Locarno 2006, in competition

**AUSWEGE** by Nina Kusturica,

Berlinale 2004, Perspektiven des jungen Films

**STRUGGLE (2003)** by Ruth Mader

Cannes 2003, Un Certain Regard

## COOP99, producers

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coop99 is the platform of a new generation of Austrian filmmakers. Our productions stand for authenticity, personal statements and an individual approach.

coop99 continues a long lasting cooperation which started at the Vienna Film Academy with international successful short films.

coop99 is a limited liability company (Ltd.) following Austrian law. Its' associates are exclusively private individuals. Neither TV associated nor broadcasting companies participate in the company. The company is equally shared by Barbara Albert, Jessica Hausner, Martin Gschlacht and Antonin Svoboda who are associates as well as managing directors of the company.

### **FILMOGRAPHY coop99**

**LOVELY RITA** (Jessica Hausner, 2001)  
coop99/Essential Film (D)

**COLD FRONT** (Valentin Hitz, 2003)  
coop99

**FREE RADICALS** (Barbara Albert, 2003)  
coop99/Zero Film (D)/Fama Film (CH)

**VISIONS OF EUROPE** (including a short-film by Barbara Albert, 2004)  
Zentropa (DM)/coop99

**HOTEL** (Jessica Hausner, 2004)  
coop99/Essential Film (D)

**THE EDUKATORS** (Hans Weingartner, 2004)  
y3-film (D)/coop99

**DARWIN'S NIGHTMARE** (Hubert Sauper, 2004)  
coop99/mille et une production (F)/Saga Film (B)

**SLEEPER** (Benjamin Heisenberg, 2005)  
coop99/juicy film (D)

**YOU BET YOUR LIFE** (Antonin Svoboda, 2005)  
coop99/Triluna Film (CH)

**GRBAVICA** (Jasmila Zbanic, 2005)  
coop99/Deblokada (BHI)/Noir Film (D)/Jadran Film (Cro)

**ERIC PLESKOW – A PORTRAIT** (Andrea Eckert, 2006)  
coop99 – in postproduction

**DICK** (Antonin Svoboda, 2006)  
coop99 - in postproduction



## CAST

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Nina	Nina Proll
Brigitte	Birgit Minichmayr
Alex	Ursula Strauss
Carmen	Kathrin Resetarits
Nicole	Gabriela Hegedüs
Daphne	Ina Strnad
Norbert (bridegroom)	Georg Friedrich
Sandra (bride)	Darina Dujmic
girl-friend of the bride	Angelika Niedetzky
Stefan	Simon Hatzl
Manfred	Christian Strasser
Patrick	Erich Knoth
Margot (widow)	Noemi Fischer
arresting officer	Fritz Hammel
Kurt	Hary Prinz
Ronnie	Dieter Hermann
Afghan girl	Arzu Nabavi

## CREW

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Director and Writer	Barbara Albert
Photography	Bernhard Keller
Editor	Karina Ressler
Art Director	Katharina Wöppermann
Costume Design	Veronika Albert
Make-Up	Helene Lang, Martha Ruess
Sound	Dietmar Zuson
Sound Design	Andreas Kopriva
Soundmix	Bernhard Maisch
Casting	Sandra Bohle, Veronika Albert
Producers	Antonin Svoboda, Martin Gschlacht, Barbara Albert
Production	coop99 filmproduktion