

MUSIC  
BOX  
FILMS

presents

# FRANCOFONIA

A film by Alexander Sokurov



87 min | France/Germany/Netherlands | 2015 | Not Rated | Dolby 5.1  
In French, Russian and German with English subtitles

**Official Website:** <http://www.musicboxfilms.com/francofonia>

**Press Materials:** <http://www.musicboxfilms.com/francofonia-press>

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## **FESTIVALS AND AWARDS**

Opening Night Selection – First Look Festival (Museum of the Moving Image)  
Official Selection – Venice Film Festival  
Winner, Federa Award – Venice Film Festival  
Official Selection – BFI London Film Festival  
Official Selection – Toronto International Film Festival  
Official Selection – San Sebastian Film Festival  
Official Selection – Reykjavik International Film Festival  
Official Selection – Thessaloniki International Film Festival

## **SYNOPSIS**

Set against the backdrop of the Louvre Museum's history and artworks, master director Alexander Sokurov (*Russian Ark*) applies his uniquely personal vision onto staged re-enactments and archives for this fascinating portrait of real-life characters Jacques Jaujard and Count Franziskus Wolff-Metternich and their compulsory collaboration at the Louvre Museum under the Nazi Occupation. These two remarkable men - enemies then collaborators - share an alliance which would become the driving force behind the preservation of museum treasures. In its exploration of the Louvre Museum as a living example of civilization, **FRANCOFONIA** is a stunning and urgently relevant meditation on the essential relationship between art, culture, and history.

Throughout his vast filmography – documentary, fiction and others somewhere in between – Alexander Sokurov has demonstrated that a museum is much more than a place to preserve art. Museums are the veritable DNA of a civilization, the living organ of the city where the heart of a nation beats. With **FRANCOFONIA**, he explores a historical chapter that we might know, but whose description does not take into account all the lines that run through it. Sokurov's body of work includes his "Men of Power" tetralogy (*Faust*, *The Sun* [Emperor Hirohito], *Taurus* [Vladimir Lenin] and *Moloch* [Adolph Hitler]), *Russian Ark* (set entirely in St Petersburg's Hermitage Museum), *Mother and Son* and *Father and Son*.

## **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

Set against the backdrop of the Louvre Museum's history and artworks, master director Alexander Sokurov (*Russian Ark*) applies his uniquely personal vision onto staged re-enactments and archives for **FRANCOFONIA**, a fascinating portrait of real-life characters Jacques Jaujard and Count Franziskus Wolff-Metternich and their compulsory collaboration at the Louvre Museum under the Nazi Occupation. These two remarkable men - enemies then collaborators - share an alliance which would become the driving force behind the preservation of museum treasures. In its exploration of the Louvre Museum as a living example of civilization, **FRANCOFONIA** is a stunning and urgently relevant meditation on the essential relationship between art, culture, and history.

## **LOGLINE**

**FRANCOFONIA** is Alexander Sokurov's portrait of the real-life collaboration that saved the Louvre Museum under the Nazi Occupation, a stunning and urgently relevant meditation on the essential relationship between art, culture, and history.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

The production of **FRANCOFONIA** brought together three countries and three producers familiar with Alexander Sokurov's films and his working methods for having already produced or distributed several of his films. From France, Pierre-Olivier Bardet (Ideale Audience) has produced and distributed Sokurov documentaries and elegies, including **ELEGY OF A VOYAGE**. From Germany, Thomas Kufus (zero one film) has produced several Sokurov feature films, including **MOLOCH** and **MOTHER AND SON**. From the Netherlands, Els Vandevorst (N279 Entertainment) was a co-producer on Sokurov's **FATHER AND SON**.

Over the course of eighteen months' development financed by the producers, the Louvre, the MEDIA programme, France's CNC, and the German-Russian Co-Development Fund, the special creative process of Alexander Sokurov was supported by contributing extremely precise factual information to nourish his own imaginary vision. There is nothing vague in his approach, but on the contrary, a freedom of interpretation that is all the greater as it is nourished by the many facts, images and sounds gradually amassed, translated, and organized so that he can inhabit them in his turn in order to try and find a truth: not a historical truth, nor one derived from hypothetical speculation, but rather an organic truth, the product of his highly personal, often unexpected vision. As an artist, Sokurov detects what we cannot see. In the case of **FRANCOFONIA**, the lines between documentary and fiction fade, not to take us towards what is false, or reconstructed, but on the contrary to seek out the blinding revelation which enlightens, and the interpretative gesture which touches what is right and true.

What meaning can we give to the appropriation of a work of art by an occupying army? While in this case we are talking precisely about the German occupation of France during the Second World War, and while the occupying forces are driven by a specific ideology – Nazism – there is no shortage of examples of other removals, pillage, expropriations, extortion and exports of art works in history. **FRANCOFONIA** is a meditation on the unique character of the work of art, and the common desire to incorporate what Walter Benjamin called the aura that emanates from it. Sokurov's film encourages people to think about the links between appropriation and domination, a political vision of the world and an aesthetic representation of it. In addition, it shows the special position occupied by museums in the public space of the West today.

These issues are perceptible in **FRANCOFONIA**, but always with the subtlety specific to a poetic cinema which does not tackle its subjects head-on, but rather by successive brushstrokes, seeking to peel away, layer by layer, the material to confront ourselves with what is nearly impossible to say or show. As in many of his other films, Sokurov uses a combination of techniques in **FRANCOFONIA**: filming with digital cameras, the inclusion of archive footage, image processing by adding, superimposing or incorporating other visual components, by distorting or modifying perspectives, etc. His mastery of the visual results of composite images reveals a stylistic unity which the multiplicity of sources and techniques used could have otherwise diluted.

# COMMENTS FROM ALEXANDER SOKUROV

## THE ARKS

What would Paris be without the Louvre, or Russia without the Hermitage, those indelible national landmarks? Let's imagine an ark on the ocean, with people and great works of art aboard – books, pictures, music, sculpture, more books, recordings, and more. The ark's timbers cannot resist and a crack has appeared. What will we save? The living? Or the mute, irreplaceable testimonies to the past? FRANCOFONIA is a requiem for what has perished, a hymn to human courage and spirit, and to what unites mankind.

## A WORLD WITHIN A WORLD

The museum community is probably the most stable part of the cultural world. What would we be without museums? Museums show us that a grand and magnificent culture existed before -- considerably grander, smarter, than anything we are able to create today. The levels of the Louvre, the Hermitage, the Prado, the British Museum have always seemed to me located at staggering heights. I went to the Hermitage for the first time at age 27. This is very late, but I did not have other options. I am from a very simple family, very simple background.

## THE HERMITAGE

When I heard we would be able to shoot RUSSIAN ARK in the Hermitage, I was intoxicated by the possibilities. I was literally intoxicated by the good treatment toward me and the crew by the Hermitage and [Mikhail] Piotrovsky. I was happy working there, and it seemed to me that under these conditions we could create a hymn to this world. The museum is a world within a world. By creating films in museums and about museums, we invite different people, people from different cultures, to actually meet these original works.

## THE LOUVRE

I was immediately enthusiastic when the opportunity arose to film in the Louvre. I saw it as a return to my dream of making a cycle of art films with the Hermitage, the Louvre, the Prado, the British Museum. It was wonderful that the Louvre administration responded so enthusiastically to our proposal. And then it was sheer joy to have the chance to work with my remarkable and illustrious colleague, cinematographer Bruno Delbonnel, a prominent master, a great artist. This combination of circumstances is a wonder in itself.

## NAZI SOLDIERS IN THE LOUVRE

People seem to be fascinated by the sight of Nazi soldiers in the galleries of the Louvre. Those soldiers in a temple to art? A paradox? But why should that be a paradox? Soldiers are also human beings, except that they wear boots and helmets. In actual fact, though, the Louvre's galleries were bare during the Occupation. The works they contained had been removed and hidden several years before. People had been seized by a premonition of a second world war, involving the whole of Europe. In Leningrad, in Paris and in London, people began anxiously seeking shelter – holes in the ground, refuges, strong walls and spaces deep underground – to hide works of art. People began to understand: if we perish, our art will also inevitably perish – our hopes, our prayers, our God.

## THE BOMBING OF PARIS

Paris, the city of museums, of a deep-seated humanistic culture, the cultural capital of the Old World. If Paris had been bombed in World War II, what would that have meant to us? Only as the end of all things, an irreparable event, a turning of the back on life. Strangely enough, it did not happen. Everything else was being bombed and burned while soldiers pillaged and army trucks bore off the spoils of war.

Everywhere except in Paris. Paris was a haven of salvation. In old photos of the German Occupation in Paris, we see soldiers sitting in cafés and going to theatre. Young French women and men are seen in the streets, out cycling or strolling. It was as if peace, glorious peace, had broken out.

### **JACQUES JAUJARD & FRANZ GRAF WOLFF-METTERNICH**

In studying contemporary documents, two unique figures immediately stand out from the rest: Louvre director Jacques Jaujard, and a representative of the Occupation forces, Franz Graf Wolff-Metternich. It would seem that they are enemies, but it gradually becomes clear that they are not enemies and that they have a lot in common. The period of their meeting, their confrontation, and their cooperation during the Second World War is the bulk of **FRANCOFONIA**. These two remarkable figures, who were almost the same age, each had the same vocation to protect and preserve works of art.

Who were these men and who did they represent as humanist senior civil servants? Through which practical initiatives were they able to defend the artworks? Is it possible, in the circumstances of a merciless war, to defend the values of humanity? Even in the most difficult times of that war, these two not very influential men were able to halt aggression and preserve the Louvre's great art collection. How deeply we regret today that nothing similar happened in the Soviet Union, Poland, or the rest of Eastern Europe.

### **A PATH WE HAVE ALL TRAVELLED**

**FRANCOFONIA** is not an historical film in the classic sense. I did not want to take a scientific approach, even if I attach great importance to factual details. What I was after was not a political aim, but an aim that one could characterize as artistic or more exactly as "fully conscious of" – to reflect through the lives of our characters a feeling for a period, its intonation, languages. People in their own particular circumstances, people who have fought to protect culture, to preserve art by overcoming the circumstances bearing down on them.

In my mind's eye, I saw this film as a path, a path we have all been on, a path that we are travelling again, and which the contemporary human travelling alongside us can understand and feel. A path that will enable us to shift between past, present, and future, in our own way, guided only by thoughts, reflections, and associations. **FRANCOFONIA** is more collage than chronological, often following the meanderings of changing thought-processes.

### **A SHIP IN A STORM**

In **FRANCOFONIA**, the Author corresponds with his Friend aboard a ship carrying an important collection of museum art. The ship battling the storm, like fate in its purest form, is unavoidable: what will be will be. One may suppose that the ship might have been able to avoid the storm, but for some unknown reason it did not divert, or perhaps was unable to. All the containers are lost at sea. The confrontation, the dialogue, between the Friend at sea and the Author at home is a storyline of thought, a stream of consciousness.

### **ART AND HISTORY**

If we touch art, we cannot not touch history. Art is linked to such a degree to history, the historical process, that unfortunately history takes on a destructive influence on art. It would be nice to detach art from history, but it's impossible... These characters are a part of this history, and part of life. For me, Napoleon and Marianne are not formal figures, symbolic figures. For me they are living characters, completely alive. All ghosts are alive, if they exist. And I believe in the existence of ghosts, and all these creatures that inhabit houses.

## **FRANCOFONIA**

I liked the sound of "francofonia," its tone. Like music imbues a film. As a title, Francofonia says something about what I was looking for, something that evokes a French intonation even if German and Russian have their place in the film, too.

## **DOCUMENTARY AND FICTION**

Our task was how to bring together the part that we filmed with the film archives. How would we bring it all together in one artistic fabric? When working with the archival material, we had to strip that footage of their invented, artificial image. Everything that is related to Paris in the time of the Occupation is a fictional representation. 100%! People walking in the streets, sitting in cafés - absolutely narrative cinema. We did the same thing when we filmed the Louvre from the roof. That was more an art project than documentary. But behind any documentary image shot there is an artistic endeavor. This is inevitable. It is no coincidence that many documentary filmmakers want to make narrative cinema. All this has the same single space in reality. The materials we film or that we have, we can treat them artistically or adopt a formal and non-artistic attitude.

## **A STUDENT**

It still seems to me that whatever I do is very flawed. So my relationship to cinema is that of a student. I'm simply a student in this process. I learn from whom I can learn. And these films are like my lessons. Thanks to my illustrious imaginary teachers, I try to do my lessons, pass tests and exams. What the results will be, I do not know.

## **CAST AND CREW BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Alexander Sokurov, Director**

Alexander Sokurov was born June 14, 1951 in Podorvikha, Russia (Irkutsk region). He has a Master's degree in history from the University of Gorky and a Master's degree in filmmaking from VGIK State Cinema School. His 2011 film FAUST won Venice's Golden Lion.

#### ***Selected Feature Filmography***

1978	<b>The Lonely Voice of Man</b>	2000	<b>Taurus</b>
1983	<b>Painful Indifference</b> (aka Mournful Unconcern)	2002	<b>Russian Ark</b>
1988	<b>Days of Eclipse</b>	2003	<b>Father and Son</b>
1989	<b>Save and Protect</b>	2004	<b>The Sun</b>
1990	<b>The Second Circle</b>	2006	<b>Elegy of Life</b>
1992	<b>Stone</b>	2007	<b>Alexandra</b>
1993	<b>Whispering Pages</b>	2009	<b>Reading Book of the Blockade</b> (documentary)
1995	<b>Spiritual Voices</b> (documentary)	2011	<b>Faust</b>
1996	<b>Mother and Son</b>	2015	<b>Francofonia</b>
1999	<b>Moloch</b>		

### **LOUIS-DO DE LENCQUESAING (Jacques JAUIARD)**

Louis-Do de Lencquesaing is a French actor and writer-director. He was recently seen in L'APOLLONIDE (HOUSE OF TOLERANCE) by Bertrand Bonello, POLISSE by maïwen, and FATHER OF MY CHILDREN by Mia Hansen-Love. His other credits include films by Cédric Kahn, Jean-Luc Godard, Arnaud Desplechin, Laetitia Masson, Benoit Jacquot, Olivier Assayas, Pascal Bonitzer and Michael Haneke, among others. His theater career began at the Avignon Festival under the direction of Valère Novarina before assisting Luc Bondy, Sami Frey, Bruno Bayen. His first stage direction was a Musset play that Benoit Jacquot filmed for Arte. Many theater productions followed - Schnitzler, Wedekind, Sarah Kane, Martin Crimp - for the Festival d'Automne in Paris and some of Paris' most important theaters. De Lencquesaing directed three short films, before making his feature debut with 2012's AU GALOP (IN A RUSH), presented in the Cannes Film Festival's Critics' Week. He will soon be seen in Nicolas Saada's TAJ MAHAL, Gela Babluani's MONEY and Kad Merad's MARSEILLE. He is currently preparing his second feature as a director.

### **BENJAMIN UTZERATH (Count Franziskus WOLFF-METTERNICH)**

German actor Benjamin Utzerath has an extensive career in theater and television. He has played in prestigious theaters including Hamburg's Ernst Deutsch Theater, Berlin's Schlosspark Theater and principal theaters like the Altonaer Theater, Münchner Volkstheater and Theater Lüneburg. He was a member of the Hamburg company Thalia Theatre for nine years, but has been a free agent since 2004. He also played in a production of Mother Courage at Paris' Théâtre National de Chaillot. His various appearances in German TV since 1998, include Sesamestreet, Die nervöse Grossmacht, Die Spielerin, Tatort Kiel, St. Angela, Die Eltern der Braut, Evelyn Hamanns Geschichten aus dem Leben, Jud Süß - ein Film als Verbrechen, Bargeld lacht, Der Ermittler, Meine beste Feindin, and Ein Mann wie eine Waffe. Born in 1963 in Duesseldorf, he studied at Berlin's Ernst Busch Hochschule für Schauspielkunst. He currently lives in Hamburg.

## **CREDITS**

### **CAST**

<i>Jacues Jaujard</i>	Louis-do de Lencquesaing
<i>Count Franzisku Wolff-Metternich</i>	Benjamin Utzerath
<i>Napoleon</i>	Vincent Nemeth
<i>Marianne</i>	Johanna Korthals Altes

Featuring Andrey Chelpanov, Jean-Claude Caer, and the voices of Alexander Sokurov, Francois Smesny and Peter Lontzek

Directed by **ALEXANDER SOKUROV**  
Director of Photography **BRUNO DELBONNEL**  
Assistant Directors **ALEXEI JANKOWSKI, MARINA KORENEVA**  
Original Score **MURAT KABARDOKOV** Editor **ALEXEI JANKOWSKI, HANSJORG WEISSBRICH**  
Sound Recordists **ANDRE RIGAUT, JAC VLEESHOUWER** Sound Editor **EMIL KLOTZSCH**  
Sound mix **ANSGAR FRERICH** Costumes **COLOMBE LAURIOT PREVOST** Makeup **SIMON LIVET**  
Hair Stylist **MAURINE BADASSARI** Color Grading **GILLES GRANIER** Steadicam **JAN RUBENS**  
Production Manager **FRANCOISE ETCHEGARAY**  
Post-Production Supervisors **BORIS MANG, WILLEMIEKE BONGERS**  
Line Producers **CLAIRE LION, TASSILO ASCHAUER, ANN CAROLIN RENNINGER,**  
**MARIANNE VAN HARDEVELD**  
Produced by **PIERRE-OLIVIER BARDET** (IDEAIE AUDIENCE), **THOMAS KUFUS** (ZERO ONE film),  
**ELS VANDEVORST** (N279 ENTERTAINMENT)

### **About Music Box Films**

Founded in 2007, Music Box Films is a leading North American distributor of acclaimed international, American independent and documentary features along with the best in international television. Recent releases include Pawel Pawlikowski's **IDA**, the 2015 Academy Award®-winner for Best Foreign Language Film, the acclaimed French TV series "Maison Close," and the Golden Globe-nominated Israeli film **GETT: THE TRIAL OF VIVIANE AMSALEM**.

Upcoming releases include **THE CLUB**, Pablo Larraín's Golden Globe-nominated black comedy about exiled priests, winner of the Silver Bear Grand Jury Prize at the 2015 Berlin International Film Festival and Alexander Sokurov's **FRANCOFONIA**, the story of the Louvre under Nazi Occupation. Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates The Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premiere venue for independent and foreign films.