

MEDIA KIT

October 2005

Dreams For Life

Feature
Duration 75 minutes
2005

*The seasons go by her window, she dreams about a boy she knew; his
baby brother is now a man.*

Information

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*“It is in Autumn that I call out to him
the most...”*

Dreams for Life

A film by Anna Kannava

Anna Kannava - Writer/Director
Aanya Whitehead – Producer
John Chase – Executive Producer

Maria Mercedes - as Ellen
Dai Paterson - as Martin

Firouz Malekzadeh – Cinematographer
Dina Mann - Casting Director
Jayne Russell – Production Designer
Zed Dragojlovich – Wardrobe Designer
Jill Holt – Editor
Sound Designer – Livia Ruzic

Presented by MusicArtsDance films Pty Ltd
Developed and Produced with the assistance of the
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TRANSFILM
DIXONS RECYCLED RECORDS

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Dreams For Life

One line synopsis

The seasons go by her window, she dreams about a boy she knew; his baby brother is now a man.

Synopsis

A 39-year-old recluse, Ellen, has a series of lucid dreams, which prompt her to revisit her old neighbourhood where she meets Martin, the much younger brother of her childhood love, who she used to look after as a baby. Martin, who is now a young man, falls in love with her.

Director's Statement

I have for some time been interested in the notion of when it's best to 'tell' and when to 'show' in film and what components can be used to tell the story. For example, when is it more challenging that the image tells the story, or the characters, or a voiceover, or music, or the written word? Film, like painting, is an interpretation of reality. In the case of DREAMS FOR LIFE one must think of colours, textures, patterns, sounds in a room, in a landscape, one must think of a collage, a clash even, of textures and styles.

In DREAMS FOR LIFE, there are the landscapes of Ellen's subconscious, like a corpse in a morgue, a crumbling village on a mountain in a foreign land. It may be the landscape of her parent's birthplace, one she's seen in photographs or visited as a child. These images may simply be recurring dreams. They are open to the viewer's interpretation. As well as the visual collage there are also the combinations of styles within the narrative like the scenes between young Martin and Ellen, which are conventional dialogue based, while others may be silent.

In her daily life Ellen gazes through her window to the park and seasons which reflect her mood and feelings. Across the street she watches time passing, she watches as youth pass by, season by season ready to embark on life's journey. At these times she feels regret and longing of past desires. Inside, depending on her mission for that day, the bed is covered with make-up items, sewing things, buttons, shells or balls of wool.

Through big, old trees sits Steven's house which calls her back after all these years. There is also the voice-over, Ellen's inner world. Almost poetry, this narration accompanies the painting like images. I want these passages to drive the emotion and story of that scene.

DREAMS FOR LIFE is a mosaic of textures and styles which, like poetry or painting, work on the sub-conscious as well as the conscious. It is my wish that the audience will identify with DREAMS FOR LIFE because it is a simple story about the experiences and emotions we all have as human beings.

My love for film stems from my love for all arts. Filmmaking comes the closest to incorporating all of the arts together. If the actors are not moving then the camera does or just the fact that film consists of jumping from frame to frame, from shot to shot, to me is a dance. There is the rhythm of the shots and flow of the film from beginning to end, another dance, a piece of music. Then there are the colours, textures, patterns, shades and light in each shot and frame like in a painting or a photograph. I love the power of sound, the word and the theatrical aspects of film. Perhaps I see myself as a collage artist; I try to mix and clash all the different elements and styles within the one film.

(Anna Kannava 2005)

ANNA KANNAVA

Writer/Director

After migrating from Cyprus at the age of fifteen, Anna grew up and studied in Melbourne. In 1982 she completed a Bachelor of Education in Drama and Media at Deakin University where she studied drama, film, photography and art with further courses in the '80's and '90's in writing and directing. She has directed several short films and plays including a play at La Mama Theatre, Melbourne. Anna also has experience as a writer, actor, and a short film animator. *Dreams for Life* is her first feature drama film.

Her creative credits include:

Dreams for Life – 2005 Feature - Writer/Director

The Butler – 1997 Documentary - Writer/Director

One hour personal documentary commissioned by ABC Television.

EAC Dendy Award Sydney Film Festival 1997

Diploma Merit Vision Du Reel, Switzerland 1997

Nominated Best Documentary 1997 AFI awards

Nominated Best Director Open Craft 1997 AFI awards

Diploma Merit St. Kilda Film Festival 1997

Finalist - New York Short Film Expo 1998

Vanilla Essence- 1989 - Writer/Director

Short silent drama

St. Kilda Film Festival 1989

10 Years After, 10 Years Older- 1986 - Writer/Director

Half hour personal documentary

ATOM award for best Australian film 1987

Diploma of Merit Melbourne Film Festival 1986

Diploma of Merit St. Kilda Film Festival 1987

Nominated Best Documentary Dendy Awards 1987

Screened by SBS Television

Tight Rope Water 1982 - Writer/Director

Short experimental narrative

Melbourne Film Festival 1982

Numerous experimental film festival screenings worldwide

Wedding of Venus 1981 - Writer/Director

Short experimental narrative

Numerous experimental film festival screenings worldwide

You Can Hav' Er 1980 – Writer/Director

Short personal documentary

Numerous experimental film festival screenings

Works in Progress are:

The Distance - Feature (Writing completed to Final script)

The Beautiful Woman - Feature (Writing completed to first draft script)

Stefanos of Limassol – Novel (writing completed to first draft)

FIROUZ MALEKZADEH

Cinematographer

Firouz came to Australia twelve years ago from his homeland of Iran where he worked as both a cinematographer and producer. With over 40 feature films to his credit, and considered a Master Cinematographer, he and his films have been selected and been the recipient of many awards including Cannes and other international festivals for films such as **The Runner** and **Bijou the Little Stranger**. Firouz has previously worked with Anna Kannava on her autobiographical documentary **The Butler** and **Dreams for Life** is his first feature film in his adopted country.

AANYA WHITEHEAD

Producer

Aanya Whitehead has been an active member of the Australian film industry for all of her working life. Her 2001 production, **One Night the Moon**, directed by Rachel Perkins has been selected to over 40 international festivals including Sundance, Berlin and Toronto. In the same year she completed Paul Cox's opus **The Diaries of Vaslav Nijinsky**, a film he has been working on for 35 years. In 1987 she produced **Beyond El Rocco** in association with **Channel Four UK** along with three music specials, **Transitions**, **Diffusions** and **Combustions**. **Black River** (1992 in association with BBCUK) won the special jury award Grand Prix at the IMZ Opera Screen in Paris 1993 and subsequently Aanya managed its Australia-wide theatrical distribution tour. In 1995 she line produced the Australian shoot of Juzo Itami's Japanese feature **A Quiet Life**.

Over the years Aanya has attended many international markets and festivals including **MIPTV**, **MIPCOM** and **MIDEM** in Cannes and accompanied **One Night The Moon** to Sundance and the Rocky Mountains Women's International Film Festival. She has developed ongoing relationships with numerous overseas broadcasters and distributors including **BBC UK**, **Channel Four UK**, **SVT Sweden**, **NPS Netherlands**, **ARTE France**, **Winstar/Wellspring**, **Digital Classics**, **RM Associates** and **World Link TV**.

A selection of her other producing credits include:

Dreams for Life (2005) Feature by writer/director Anna Kannava

The Widower (2004) Short Feature - directed by Kevin Lucas and based on the works of Les Murray.

Touch (2003) Short Film by writer/director Joel Hoffman

The Diaries of Vaslav Nijinsky (2001) Feature Documentary directed by Paul Cox.

One Night The Moon (2001) directed by Rachel Perkins. (See attached Awards and Festivals list)

Fish-an unborn soul (1998) - a dance performance film adaptation of Bangarra's theatre work FISH directed and written by Stephen Page in his film directing debut. Produced in association with SBS Independent.

Urban Clan (1998) - a documentary about Stephen, David and Russell Page and the Bangarra Dance Theatre directed by Michelle Mahrer. Winner for Best Sound and nominated for the 1998 AFI Awards for Best Documentary

Three Knocks On the Door (1996) - a documentary on Philippe Genty in Australia - directed by Kevin Lucas

Disturbance (1997) - a short drama film nominated for best original screenplay at the 1998 AWGIE awards.

Maria Mercedes (Ellen)

Maria Mercedes has continued to delight both Australian and international music theatre audiences for over twenty years. With starring roles in *Chess*, *Nine*, *Cats*, *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Fame-the musical* and *Sunset Boulevard*, Maria has worked with directors such as Trevor Nunn and Mark Gaal of Really Useful Productions, Jim Sharman, John Diedrich, Nancy Hayes, David Atkins and Peter Batey. For her performance in *Forbidden Broadway*, Maria won the coveted Mo Award and the Original Australian Soundtrack of *Nine* won an Aria Award.

In 2004 she was the first woman to play “Franky” in the Melbourne production of the ‘Rocky Horror Show’, and her 2004 Cabaret show sold out to Melbourne audiences.

In film, Maria has worked with directors Ana Kokinos in *Head On* and Richard Franklin in *Patrick*. Her television credits include *Greeks On The Roof* for Granada Productions/Seven Network; *Thunderstone* for Jonathan M Schiff Productions; *Cody* for Southern Star Xanadu; *E Street*; *English at Work*; *Inside Running*; *Bluey*; *Prisoner* and *Pugwell*.

As Ellen in *Dreams for Life*, Maria combines her sensitivities as an artist with the vulnerability of a woman searching for love.

Dai Paterson (Martin)

A graduate of the Australian National Institute of Dramatic Art, Dai has added classical piano and Commedia del’Arte to his skills and has performed in such classics as *Waiting for Godot*, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *The Proposal* and *Don’s Party*. In television he has appeared in *Stingers*, *Blue Heelers*, *The Secret Life of Us*, *Dogs Head Bay*, *Beastmaster* and *Above The Law*.

As a film actor, Dai has recently played the lead role of Dan Hollows in Matthew Newton’s forthcoming feature, *Right Here Right Now*. Dai Paterson’s portrayal of Martin in *Dreams for Life* brings the freshness and intrigue of youth revisiting childhood infatuation and the depth and struggle of a young man reaching maturity.

OFFICIAL SELECTION

Down Under Film Festival

Darwin, NT, May 2005

***WINNER:** Best Australian Feature Film

Greek Festival of Sydney

Sydney, April 2005

Annapolis Film Festival

Annapolis, Maryland, USA, February 2005

AUSTRALIAN THEATRICAL RELEASE

Sun Theatre, Melbourne

March 2005

*Season extended by popular demand and was listed in The Age's Top Ten Films

Valhalla Cinema, Sydney

April-May 2005

Schonell Theatre, Brisbane

July 2005

CMAX Theatre, Darwin

August 2005

Dreams For Life

REVIEWS

"SUGGESTS THE WORK OF A DEEPLY SERIOUS FILM-MAKER"

Evan Williams THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN

"It's a delicate, deceptively slight and oddly touching reflection on love and solitude and the way the past can shape our lives."

"...her film is deeply personal and difficult to classify. It struck me as a kind of poem, an aesthetic construct, beautiful, elusive, occasionally obscure, but underpinned by a strong conventional narrative..."

"Mercedes, an actor of compelling presence, gives the film its core of humanity and truth." "...aided by the use of classical music and recurring images of paintings and artworks, suggests the work of a deeply serious film-maker..."

Evan Williams THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN

"Real life seems eternally elsewhere for Kannava's pining, sensitive, ever-waiting heroines—in the past, or in the natural landscapes of another country, a lost motherland.

What lifts Kannava's work beyond a kind of suburban neo-realism is a strongly lyrical aura, and an investment in the realm of transfiguring desire. Her films are built on dream-sequences, paintings, music, dance, and a whole, sensual experience of fabrics and textures—a special and intimate 'female aesthetic' proudly claimed.

So it is not for nothing that Ellen (Maria Mercedes) in Kannava's first narrative feature, *Dreams for Life*, seems to live most fully when she is in bed—the privileged place of dreaming and solitude, contemplation and recuperation. But what awakes and troubles her out in the streets is an odd, ghostly apparition: young Martin (Dai Paterson), the handsome, soulful brother of a disturbed lover from Ellen's past."

Adrian Martin THE AGE

"This unashamedly arty film is held together by a number of impressive elements – the fragile performance of Maria Mercedes is one. She has a beautiful, quiet elegance to her; she inhabits the frame of the film so well. And the frame itself is beautifully designed by Jayne Russell, and shot by Firouz Malekzadeh."

"The film which has been delicately directed with an old fashioned formalism, is a meditation on loneliness, lost love and lost cultures."

MARGARET POMERANZ – At The Movies, ABC TV

"Anna Kannava could probably make the Moscow telephone directory look like a fascinating objet d'art she has such an innate sense of cinematic language. She also directs actors so well that she elicits their deepest personas for her - and for the us via the camera.

This tender, subtle and complex love story touches on so many private issues within each of us - lost love and loneliness, new love and melancholy, dreams that shadow us - that our emotional synapses keep popping throughout. Yet, for its poetry and depth, she never loses touch with the real world. Neither do her actors, who simply seduce us with their honesty and their feelings.

Fuelled by the depth of European sensibilities and the earthiness of Australian culture, DREAMS FOR LIFE is a window into the possibilities of human nature. And an ending you don't expect."

ANDREW L. URBAN, URBAN CINEFILE

"One of the finest Australian films of recent times..."

NEOS KOSMOS

"After migrating from Cyprus at the age of fifteen, ANNA KANNAVA has cut a highly personal path through the black boxes of Melbourne's theatre scene. She now comes up with a dreamy, singular and defiantly un-commercial debut feature."

"Dreams for Life could fairly be described as a mosaic - unraveling in jagged pieces with tender little centres, it has the formal subtlety of poetry..."

"Dreams also has a clear desire to appeal on sub-conscious levels that stands it apart from other low-budget Australian features..."

Julian Shaw FILMINK

"The grief seeped into Kannava's dreams and instead of rationalising it away, she decided to recreate it on the screen in the story of a lonely woman."

"Its Greekness forms the background, influenced by Kannava's migration to Australia at 15."

Inga Gilchrist MX CITYBEAT MELBOURNE

"ANNA IS A VERY INDIVIDUAL AND SWEET FILM-MAKER, HER WORK IS INFUSED WITH LOVE AND GRACE."

Bill Mousoulis, INNERSENSE

"Looking further afield, a near-exclusive focus on the interior lives of individuals or couples is characteristic of the more interesting low-budget and no-budget Australian features I've seen recently, such as *Lovesick* (Bill Mousoulis, 2003), *Dreams for Life* (Anna Kannava, 2004), *Forever* (Ben Speth, 2004) and *In the Moment* (Paul Jeffrey, 2004). Several of these movies could be described as "political" in different ways..."

Jake Wilson Senses of Cinema

"Going down the production ladder to experimental film and personal, essayistic film forms, interesting things begin to happen. The constraints of narrative and documentary disappear, and the films become deeply personal and probing. Anna Kannava's *Ten Years After, Ten Years Older*, for example, is a document of the filmmaker's visit home after ten years in Australia"

"Displacement and identity are explored by Anna Kannava in her autobiographical documentary *Ten Years After ... Ten Years Older* (1986), where she returns to Cyprus ten years after migrating to Australia at the age of 15."

"Fortunately, a number of other films present a rich, layered view of Greek Australian culture. and life... Anna Kannava's *Ten Years After....Ten Years Older* (1986) is an honest, moving work, which focuses on an individual's experience as a migrant. It allows the viewer to go along with the narrator as she returns to her country of birth and think and feel with her as she ruminates over memories, family, identity and loss."

Vicky Tsaconas Innersense