

# PUZZLE

(ROMPECABEZAS)

a film by

**Natalia Smirnoff**



In Competition Berlin Film Festival 2010

Argentina/ France / 2010 / 88 mins / Spanish with English subtitles / 1:85 / Dolby  
SRD / Certificate: tbc

Release date: Spring 2011

**FOR ALL PRESS ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT**

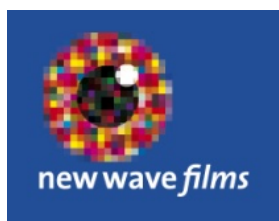
Sue Porter/Lizzie Frith – Porter Frith Ltd

Tel: 020 7833 8444/E-Mail: [porterfrith@hotmail.com](mailto:porterfrith@hotmail.com)

**FOR ALL OTHER ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT**

Robert Beeson – New Wave Films

[robert@newwavefilms.co.uk](mailto:robert@newwavefilms.co.uk)



10 Margaret Street

London W1W 8RL

Tel: 020 3178 7095

[www.newwavefilms.co.uk](http://www.newwavefilms.co.uk)

## SYNOPSIS

Maria del Carmen is a forty-something housewife whose only concern over the past twenty years has been the well-being of her husband and of her now grown-up kids. But when she is offered a puzzle for her birthday, she suddenly discovers she has a very special gift: she can assemble puzzles really fast.

Intrigued by an ad “Looking for Partner for Puzzle Competitions” in her local store, she decides to live her new addiction fully, no matter how unsupportive her family is. Together with the author of the ad, a magnetic millionaire bachelor, she trains in the rules of the game, even if it means lying to her husband... Maria is determined to take things to a new level: she dreams of winning the national tournament and travelling to Germany for the World Puzzle Championship.



## CREW

Written and Directed by	Natalia Smirnoff
Executive Producer	Gabriel Pastore
Art Director	Maria Eugenia Sueiro
Director of Photography and Camera	Barbara Alvarez
Assistant Director and Casting	Natalia Urruti
Costume Design	Julio Suarez
Production Manager	Lucia Ries
Sound Director	Fernando Soldevila
Editor	Natacha Valerga
Original Music	Alejandro Franov
Produced by	Gabriel Pastore, Caroline Dhainaut, Luis Sartor, Natalia Smirnoff
Production	Carousel Films (Argentina) Las Niñas Pictures (France)

## CAST

<b>MARIA ONETTO</b>	Maria del Carmen
<b>GABRIEL GOITY</b>	Juan
<b>ARTURO GOETZ</b>	Roberto
<b>HENNY TRAILES</b>	Carlotta
<b>FELIPE VILLANUEVA</b>	Juan Pablo
<b>JULIAN DOREGGER</b>	Iván
<b>NORA ZINSKY</b>	Raquel
<b>MARCELA GUERTY</b>	Susana
<b>MIRTA WONS</b>	Graciela
<b>MERCEDES FRAILE</b>	Carmen
<b>DENISE GROESMAN</b>	Victoria
<b>JIMENA RUIZ ECHAZU</b>	Carla
<b>PACHO GUERTY</b>	Pedro
<b>NESTOR CANIGLIA</b>	Ricardo

Argentina/France 2010    88 minutes    Spanish with English subtitles

RED ONE blowup to 35mm | 1:85 | Dolby-SRD/SR

## INTERVIEW WITH NATALIA SMIRNOFF

**You started your career in cinema as a Casting Director and First Assistant Director. How did you draw on this experience for your first feature film?**

I have been really lucky to work with very talented directors, such as Lucrecia Martel, Jorge Gaggero, Alejandro Agresti, Pablo Trapero, Ariel Rotter, Veronica Chen, Marco Bechis... As First Assistant Director, you work very closely with the director and participate in the entire filmmaking process. This was wonderful, it made it easier for me when I got to be on my first set, directing for the first time. I remember when I worked on Lucrecia Martel's films, we were always trying to find the best point of view for the story. So I learnt on set the importance of shooting with a clear point of view. Also as Casting Director, I needed to act, to play the parts with the actors. This gave me a lot of training and an understanding of acting. I paid a lot of attention to these two aspects in my film.

**Could you draw parallels between assembling a puzzle and making a film?**

For sure! Assembling a puzzle is putting a lot of pieces together to create "the big picture". Writing and making a film is the exact same process. But with a puzzle of one million pieces! To assemble a puzzle you have to pay attention to every small piece. You have to discover its shape, its colors, its peculiarities... And only then can you start to see how all the pieces connect. It's the same with actors, shots, scenes, units, with props, sets, wardrobe, sounds, voices, colors, lights... You have to know each element, play with them. But to play well, you have to pay attention to each part separately and then piece them carefully together.

**Gabriel Goity, Maria Onetto, Arturo Goetz: three renowned Argentinean actors. What guided the choice of your lead actors? Had you worked with them before?**

I love actors whose work I can never predict. They're hard to find: they must be brave and willing to take a lot of risks. And I like actors who are good in comedy too. This was the priority in their selection because it would give another dimension to the film. I met Maria Onetto when I was casting for "El Otro", by Ariel Rotter. During that period, I was also writing the script of "Puzzle". So, I was twice as anxious to offer her the part of Maria del Carmen. But it was perfect, like love at first sight. I sent her the script and she said yes two hours later. Then it took me three more years to shoot the film. She was kind enough to wait that long. Maria Onetto is such an incredible actress. She started her career on stage. She is so powerful: it's fascinating to work with her. She's always surprising you. Gabriel Goity is a very popular actor in Argentina. He can be the sweetest person in the world and, a second later, a real demon. Maria del Carmen's husband needed to be someone strong. Not someone you could easily abandon. Their marriage is a marriage of true love, which makes the story stronger. I met Gabriel a year prior to shooting "Puzzle". He was very busy doing a TV series and a theater play. But he loved the project and was incredibly supportive, even though he didn't know me. Luckily he accepted and adapted his complicated schedule to make the film.

For the part of Roberto, I was looking for someone who could play the part without being prejudiced. Someone who took the puzzle assembling business seriously. I had originally pictured Roberto to be younger, but Arturo Goetz was perfect for the role. I had worked with Arturo on "La Niña Santa" and had cast him for several films. Watching his energy is one of life's pleasures. Before reading the script, he invited me over for tea and told me that his favorite tea varieties were Lapsang Souchong and Earl Grey, exactly the same as Roberto's in the script. I couldn't believe it. Ironically,

Arturo used to assemble puzzles but had to quit because they kept him up all night. At that exact moment I knew it had to be him.

**How does your film connect with what has been called the Argentinean New Wave? What are your cinematic influences?**

I really like some Argentinean films but don't feel connected to an "Argentinean New Wave". For instance, I don't see many common elements between Lucrecia Martel, Pablo Trapero or Lissandro Alonso. Of course, most of us are from the same generation, and in that sense I feel close to them. But I don't see a homogenous aesthetic movement. Some movies are more descriptive, others are more contemplative. Perhaps the shared quality is that they all have a clear point of view. "Puzzle" tells a story, it has a typical plot, it's storydriven. Perhaps it is more conventional. It doesn't describe a particular social reality at a given period. It's more on the fantastical side. As for the influences, the list is long. I love John Cassavettes and Tim Burton. I like Woody Allen, Claude Sautet, Rebecca Miller's "Personal Velocity", Jean-Pierre Jeunet's "Amélie", Pedro Almodovar, Billy Wilder and David Lynch, and many more! And Lucrecia Martel and Jorge Gaggero are a direct influence.

**What is your relationship with Buenos Aires?**

I couldn't live in any other place. I love our mix. For example, I'm Russian, Italian and Spanish, and finally Argentinean. All these different cultures live together. Buenos Aires is European in some way, but not in others. And it's the "not European" part that turns the city into a chaos. A chaos which I strive in, because I don't think that life can be sorted. If you are looking for order there, for things to be accomplished in a straightforward way, or simply for people to be on time for an appointment, you are heading straight towards suicide. In that sense, Buenos Aires is more honest than other cities. I like the warm side of people. But it's also a place where you can clearly see the dark side of people, yet in a sympathetic way. It's complex, really complex but I truly like it.

**What statement does "Puzzle" make about contemporary Argentina and the emancipation of women in Latin-American society?**

Everyone needs freedom. And needs to be treated well. In our culture this doesn't happen. There are still too many deaths due to domestic violence in our country. And of course there's the "macho" myth, "men don't cry", which affects our culture and our marriages. It's so important that women can work to earn their own living, so that they can be independent and adult. If the husband is the only one earning money, then the wife becomes almost like a daughter. Imagine how tragic her life becomes when everybody finally leaves the household - she's all alone with nothing to do. Too many women become crazy when they turn 50. Another thing, which I find unbelievable, is the number of women who don't have a passion, who are simply housewives. I am not saying that this is wrong but there is something unbalanced in these situations. I believe that balance or at least trying to reach that balance is the most important objective in life. With happy mothers, the world would be better. I'm sure of that. Every woman in the world who is a working mother knows how difficult it is to find the balance. Many have failed with this. But this is part of the growing process as a woman, as a human being.

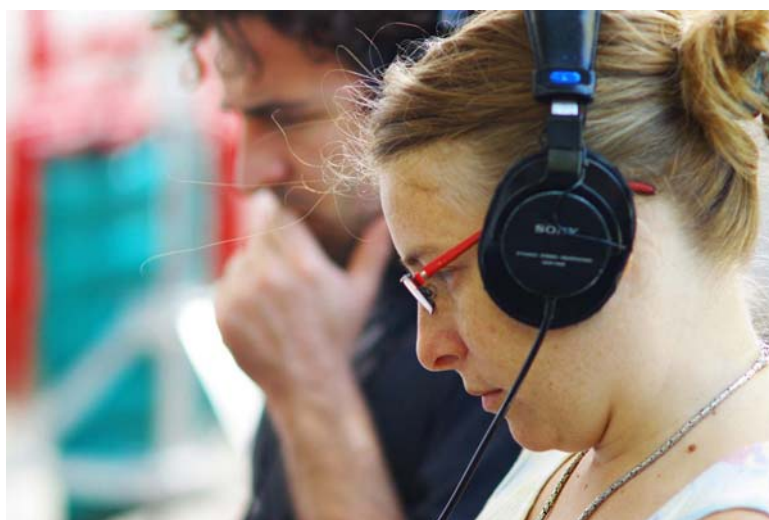
**Are there similarities between Maria del Carmen's path and your own? To what extent is "Puzzle" an autobiographical film?**

Maria del Carmen is a passionate and maybe even obsessed woman. I believe that when you decide to hold onto a passion and never let go of it, you can change. Everything around you changes. And

you experience very intense, blissful moments. Those are unique moments, when you risk everything without ever thinking about the consequences. Maria del Carmen goes through such a turning point. There is no doubt that you lose some things in the process. But others are conquered. I have lived through a couple of experiences like this and they are landmarks in your life. There's no doubt: I'm close to Maria del Carmen. On the other hand, my mother is also close to Maria del Carmen. "Puzzle" is about a mother, about all mothers in some way, about this marvelous and incredible feeling which makes her love unconditional to other people, to her children and her family — and also about her need to control everything. I love the fact that she is not an obvious hero; she is not strong in the usual sense. I love the way she wins. Her willpower and determination are her strengths. That doesn't mean she feels no emotions or doesn't cry. But she doesn't shout, she is reserved, she accepts orders from others. She gets what she wants because she's loving, she's dedicated to others, she would keep on giving even if she didn't receive anything in return. Sometimes we feel fascinated by strong personalities. I mean "strong" in the obvious way — visible fortitude. But as I was growing up, I learnt to focus on another type of strength. Strength you can't perceive at first glance. You just see someone who is able to adjust to the situation, without confrontation. But, if you keep watching, you begin to see that this person is always there, that she is fighting, in her own way. I just learnt to recognize that other way of fighting. We are accustomed to the male way of fighting, but I like the female way, with no shouting, perhaps not so brave. Maybe, sometimes, Maria del Carmen seems lost, but she keeps on going. I learned to appreciate this from my mother.



## NATALIA SMIRNOFF



“When I was 21 years old, I was studying Systems Engineering. I needed seven courses to graduate. On top of that, I was working as a program director for a cable TV channel. I had to travel all the time, I was spending my time in planes and hotel. I didn’t have any time for myself. But then, one day, I had a shock: my plane almost crashed. Thankfully it did not happen, but I saw the possibility of death. So a few months later, I enrolled into the Cinema University. I quit my engineering course, and three years later my career in television, to work in the cinema industry.”

### FEATURE FILM

2010

Puzzle (*Rompecabezas*)

### Short films

1996

Desencuentro

(Video Clip. 16mm 1996)

1997

Naturaleza Muerta

(Short Film. 16mm 1997)

### *As First Assistant Director*

Nacido y Criado (Born and Bred)

Director: Pablo Trapero

Cama Adentro

Director: Jorge Gaggero

Un mundo menos peor

Director: Alejandro Agresti

Valentin

Director: Alejandro Agresti

### *As Casting Director*

La Mujer sin cabeza (The Headless Woman)

Director: Lucrecia Martel

La Niña Santa (The Holy Girl)

Director: Lucrecia Martel

La Ciénaga (The Swamp)

Director: Lucrecia Martel

Agua

Director: Verónica Chen

## Arturo Goetz

### Filmography

<b>Los condenados</b> (2009)	Director: Isaki Lacuesta
<b>El cuarto de Leo</b> (2009)	Director: Enrique Buchichio
<b>La sangre brota</b> (2008)	Director: Pablo Fendrik
<b>El nido vac lo</b> (2008)	Director: Daniel Burman
<b>El otro</b> (2007)	Director: Ariel Rotter
<b>Derecho de familia</b> (2006)	Director: Daniel Burman
<b>La niña santa</b> (2004)	Director: Lucrecia Martel

## Maria Onetto

### Selective Filmography

<b>Horizontal /Vertical</b> (2009)	Director: Nicolas Tuozzo
<b>Nunca estuvistetan adorable</b> (2009)	Director: Mausí Martínez
<b>En nuestros corazones para siempre</b> (2009)	Director: Javier Daulte, Sandra Gugliotta
<b>Tratame bien</b> (2009)	Director: Daniel Barone
<b>La mujer sin cabeza</b> (2008)	Director: Lucrecia Martel
<b>El otro</b> (2007)	Director: Ariel Rotter

## Gabriel Goity

### Filmography

<b>Avallay</b> (2009)	Director: Fernando Spiner
<b>Un novio para mi mujer</b> (2008)	Director: Juan Taratuto
<b>Pajaritos</b> (2005)	Director: Raul Perrone
<b>Mujeres asesinas</b> TV Series	Director: Alberto Lecchi
<b>Tremendo amanecer</b> (2004)	Director: Gustavo Postiglione
<b>Adios querida luna</b> (2004)	Director: Fernando Spiner

**The World Puzzle Championship** is an annual international puzzle competition run by the World Puzzle Federation. All the puzzles in the competition are designed to be language and culture neutral. Originally only a jigsaw competition, it has since expanded to a wide variety of challenging games and riddles.

The World Puzzle Championship was the brainchild of Will Shortz, who wanted to create an event where puzzlers from different countries could compete on an even playing field. The first WPC was held in New York in 1992. National teams are determined by local affiliates from the World Puzzle Federation. Of the 18 championships held between 1992 and 2009, 11 have been won by the U.S. team, 3 by the Czech Republic, 3 by Germany and 1 by Japan.