

Official Selection  
tiff  
Toronto International  
Film Festival 2020

GIORNATE  
L'AUTORI

PREPARATIONS TO BE TOGETHER  
FOR AN UNKNOWN PERIOD OF TIME

ORIGINAL  
TITLE FELKÉSZÜLÉS MEGHATÁROZATLAN IDEIG TARTÓ EGYÜTTLÉTRE

A FILM BY  
LILI HORVÁT



A woman with dark, wavy hair and blue eyes is looking out a window. She is wearing a light-colored, textured coat. The window shows a view of a city street with buildings and a bridge in the distance. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting dusk or dawn.

# SYNOPSIS

Márta, a 40-year-old neurosurgeon, falls in love. She leaves her shining American career behind and returns to Budapest to start a new life with the man she loves. But she waits for him at the Liberty Bridge in vain — he does not appear at their rendezvous. Márta starts to search for him desperately, but when she finally finds him, the love of her life claims that they have never met before.



## INTERVIEW WITH **LILI HORVÁT**

### WHERE DID THIS FILM IDEA COME FROM?

A woman, brimming with love, travels to the man she will start a new life with. Yet, at her arrival, he reacts strangely, saying, “I don’t know you. This is the first time in my life I’ve ever seen you”. Reality shudders — we don’t know whether the man or the woman is telling the truth. When this situation came to me, I didn’t know yet who the woman is and who the man is, but this was the core idea around which the story of *Preparations* would grow.

I guarded that sprout of a scene for a long time, then suddenly — on a bus in Berlin, by the way — the ideas began to come. They should both be doctors, two people around 40 years old. The woman should come from a distant place, another continent. She needs to sacrifice something for him. And so on. I realized that what I wanted to speak about was the enormous role of our own imagination when we are in love.

When we were already deep in the production of the film, that first scene still remained the heart of the story. I don’t think I spoke as much about any other scene to the two main actors as I did about this one. They had to make something extremely

complex that feels true, not only in the moment when the viewer sees this scene, but also after the whole film had played out.

In the editing, we realized that the film’s real starting point is that scene. That is the moment when we have to catch the audience. In order to get us there as soon as possible — it’s at about the 7th minute in the final cut — we decided we’d have to cut out a couple of really beautiful scenes from the beginning.





## HOW DID YOU FORMULATE THE CHARACTER OF MÁRTA?

This woman goes blindly but determined toward something — even in the moments of greatest doubt the strength of intuition shines in her. While sometimes her character is on the brink of madness, everyone who has ever waited in vain on a date, or who has projected something into their love, can feel what she feels.



Márta is a strong, dauntless but also fragile character. She's an outsider. In Hungary, she's a stranger in the home she left behind, a stranger because of her unusual decisions, a stranger even in her own field of medical work because of her exceptional talent.

Her basic state is a lone existence. She's adapted to it, and even likes it. She has connections (friendships, sometimes romantic ones), but she doesn't let anyone inside. Loneliness is not bitter to her, but rather results in a very intense and exciting inner life.

Then at a medical conference held in New Jersey, a passing meeting with a Hungarian doctor strikes her like a bolt of lightning. It's the first time in her life she feels that here is a person she would allow into her secret inner world. From that moment of intuition, suddenly everything she's worked for so far (her career, her life as an American) seems insignificant to her. Casting all rational arguments aside, and without another thought, she goes after the man that evokes this in her.

In the development of Márta's character, I was inspired by obsessed female characters such as Kleist's Käthchen von Heilbronn, Madeleine in Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, Truffaut's *Adèle H.* and Kieślowski's female characters.

## WHY DOES THE FILM PLAY IN A MEDICAL SETTING?

The medical setting is meant to be the counterpoint of madness. We see a seemingly crazy woman race after a guy, but then the story takes a turn: this crazy woman happens to be a leading neurosurgeon in an American hospital.

When I began looking into the world of doctors during the script writing process, numerous dramaturgical possibilities appeared. The labcoat, the mask as an element of disguise, from under which a detail of the private ego of the characters might flash, the ritualistic act of donning and removing these things, all are in play with the essential questions of the film: Who are you? Are you here?

The first “love scene” between the two main characters takes place during a difficult operation, where the two doctors operate in incredible harmony — I really liked the low-key romanticism of this situation.

That while writing the screenplay, I chose brain surgeons out of all the kinds of doctors was also not arbitrary. For one, there are



really concrete things about it: flesh, blood, bones. But there is also something very mysterious about brain surgery — its almost poetic side — that the doctor is holding a living person’s feelings and thoughts in his/her hands, literally between his/her fingers. That thinking and feeling are physical processes is a fact on the edge of comprehension. This resonates very well with the essence of our film.

As the character of János Drexler says in one scene: “The Big Bang, the universe, we all accept these things as a vast and exceptional mystery surrounding us. In reality, we all are parts of that mystery, but from within the microcosmos of our own consciousness.”



## HOW DID THE VISUAL CONCEPT OF THE FILM DEVELOP?

Róbert Maly, the DP and I have worked together since our first year of university. When we approach the visualization of a script, we always try to find references first. The key element of Preparations is insecurity, the fragility and precariousness of reality. While researching that, we came upon the work of Saul Leiter, an American photographer, in an exhibition in Vienna.



The mysteriousness hidden in his photos, in their texture, color, lighting and framing, became our first point of reference. We realized that, in order to bring a world similar to the atmosphere of Leiter's photos to the screen, it was essential to shoot on celluloid.

In a technical sense, celluloid is an imperfect raw material. It will never be perfectly sharp. It is grainy and noisy. Its range and color depth is narrow. It records fewer frames. Already, you are choosing a physical material with limited properties compared to video.







**||** *With our pictures, we hoped to capture the nearly inconceivable: a gut feeling, intuition, the secret of our irrational choices for love.*

This imperfection is irretrievably recorded into the material at the moment you develop it. Films shot on celluloid have an indispensable need for the viewer's memories, feelings and thoughts for it to fully flesh out the given story. By activating the viewer's own fantasies and projections, we can direct their attention to the real terrain of our story, beyond the concrete actions: the narrow borderline between reality and imagined reality. So, our choice of film material was not an aestheticizing luxury, but rather a gesture pairing the creative imagination of the viewer with Márta's projections, so we can enhance the true questions of ***Preparations***.











WRITER AND DIRECTOR  
**LILI HORVÁT**

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Lili Horvát (b. 1982) grew up in Budapest. She studied audiovisual arts at the Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris and film directing at the University of Theatre and Film in Budapest. *The Wednesday Child*, Lili's first feature won the East of the West competition at Karlovy Vary 2015, and received numerous awards worldwide. In 2016, Lili co-founded the production company Poste Restante which produced her second feature, *Preparations to Be Together for an Unknown Period of Time*.







## LEADING ROLES

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NATASA STORK AS MÁRTA VIZY



After **Natasa Stork** graduated from the University of Theatre and Film (SzFE) in Budapest, she contracted with the National Theater. After two years, she continued her career as a freelancer, appearing in numerous independent and repertory theater productions in Hungary, Germany, Holland and Switzerland. Though her minimalist and direct style of acting virtually predestined her for film acting, ***Preparations*** is her first screen appearance in a lead role.

VIKTOR BODÓ AS JÁNOS DREXLER



**Viktor Bodó** achieved recognition as one of the brightest acting talents of his generation at the end of the 1990s. In 2001, he decided to give up acting to turn his sights on directing. He obtained a degree in theater directing and then a position in the Katona József Theater as a director. He went on to found his own company: Szputnyik Hajózási Társaság. He works regularly abroad, most often in Germany. His theater productions gained significant success throughout Europe, and were awarded numerous, distinguished prizes. Bodó refused acting roles for more than 10 years — ***Preparations*** is his return to the screen.

BENETT VILMÁNYI AS ALEX



**Benett Vilmányi** graduated from the University of Theatre and Film two years ago. Despite his young age, he has already performed in very many theaters and film roles. He was one of the main characters in the *In Treatment* series for HBO Hungary to significant industry praise and national recognition.







# PREPARATIONS TO BE TOGETHER FOR AN UNKNOWN PERIOD OF TIME

2020 - HUNGARY - 95 MINUTES - SOUND 5.1 - 1.85:1 - IN HUNGARIAN

## MAIN CAST

**NATASA STORK** MÁRTA VIZY | **VIKTOR BODÓ** JÁNOS DREXLER | **BENETT VILMÁNYI** ALEX | **ZSOLT NAGY** BARNA KRIVÁN  
**PÉTER TÓTH** PSYCHIATRIST | **ANDOR LUKÁTS** DR. FRIED | **ATTILA MOKOS** DR. ELKÁN | **LINDA MOSHIER** HELEN | **JÚLIA LADÁNYI** FANNI

## MAIN CREW

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY **LILI HORVÁT** | DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **RÓBERT MALLY** | EDITOR **KÁROLY SZALAI H.S.E.**  
COMPOSER **GÁBOR KERESZTES** | SOUND DESIGNER **RUDOLF VÁRHEGYI** | PRODUCTION DESIGNER **SANDRA SZTEVANOVITY**  
ART DIRECTOR **ANNA NYITRAI** | COSTUME DESIGNER **JULI SZLÁVIK** | SCRIPT ADVISOR **DÓRA CSERNÁTONY**  
MEDICAL ADVISOR **DR. DUSAN VITANOVIC** | PRODUCERS **DÓRA CSERNÁTONY** **LILI HORVÁT** **PÉTER MISKOLCZI**

POSTE RESTANTE PRESENTS A FILM BY LILI HORVÁT „PREPARATIONS TO BE TOGETHER FOR AN UNKNOWN PERIOD OF TIME” FUNDED BY THE NATIONAL FILM INSTITUTE  
STARRING NATASA STORK VIKTOR BODÓ BENETT VILMÁNYI ZSOLT NAGY ANDOR LUKÁTS PÉTER TÓTH DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY RÓBERT MALLY EDITOR KÁROLY SZALAI H.S.E.  
SOUND DESIGN RUDOLF VÁRHEGYI COMPOSER GÁBOR KERESZTES PRODUCTION DESIGNER SANDRA SZTEVANOVITY ART DIRECTOR ANNA NYITRAI COSTUME DESIGNER JULI SZLÁVIK  
SCRIPT ADVISOR DÓRA CSERNÁTONY MEDICAL ADVISOR DR. DUSAN VITANOVIC PRODUCERS DÓRA CSERNÁTONY LILI HORVÁT PÉTER MISKOLCZI WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY LILI HORVÁT

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FOCUS RESTATE NFI