

# THE REST IS SILENCE / Restul e tăcere (2007)

NAE CARANFIL

## Contents (Overview-Synopsis-Characters-Character Analysis-Themes-Scenes)

### OVERVIEW

**Auteur** Nae Caranfil (b. 1960) is a highly acclaimed director, one of the first of the Romanian New Wave that emerged right after the fall of Ceausescu's totalitarian regime in the 1990s. The son of a reputed film critic, Caranfil graduated from the Theatre and Film Institute in Bucharest in 1984. During his youth, he took music lessons and drew comic sketches, talents that he has used for writing the score and the script of most of his films. His tragic-comedies about the Western dream have gained him not only national but also international recognition: the Critics Award for *Sundays on Leave* (*È pericoloso sporgersi*, 1993) at Montpellier Mediterranean Festival, Golden Bayard Award for Best Screenplay for *Dolce far niente* (1998) at Namur International Festival of French-Speaking Film, and several accolades for *Philanthropy* (*Filantropica*, 2002). His other productions are *Asphalt Tango* (*Asfalt Tango*, 1996), *The Rest is Silence* (*Restul e tăcere*, 2007), for which he received a Gopo Award (a highly prestigious national award in Romania, similar to the Academy Awards in the US), *Closer to the Moon* (2013) and *6.9 on the Richter Scale* (*6.9 pe Scara Richter*, 2016).

**Film** *The Rest is Silence*, released in 2007, was the most expensive cinematographic project made in post-revolutionary Romania up to that date, working on a budget of 2.4 million euros allocated by the Romanian National Film Centre. The movie was a 2007 nominee of the Golden Leopard award (Locarno International Film Festival) and the Warsaw Award (Warsaw International Film Festival). In 2008 it won the Special Prize of the Jury and the Best Production Design of the Romanian Union Filmmakers Award. In 2009, it was the winner and nominee of several sections in the Gopo Awards.

**Background** The movie draws inspiration from the two-hour long movie, *The Independence of Romania* (1912) directed by Aristide Demetriade and Grigore Brezeanu, with the financial support of Leon Popescu (a rich producer and politician). Caranfil conveys a rather light and bemused view on the movie industry and idiosyncrasies of the Romanian society in early 1900s. On the whole, the movie, unfolding on a tragicomic tone, pays homage to silent cinema and art, and documents the societal changes in Romania thirty-five years after gaining its independence. In Caranfil's words, the movie pursues 'the powerful and contrasting duality between the artist (young and inexperienced Grig, with great passion for movies) and financier (the eccentric Leon Negrescu)'. The title of the movie, 'The Rest is Silence', is an intertextual reference to the last words in Hamlet's monologue reflecting on death and what remains beyond it.

The Romanian War of Independence (1877-78) took place in the context of the war between Russia and Turkey. The Romanian Principalities joined the Russian forces and declared their independence on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1877, after about 400 years of Ottoman rule.

### CINEMATIC NARRATION

*The Rest is Silence* has two levels: a film within a film, and the frame story. On the story level, it follows the mishaps and meteoric success of Grig, a young director who dreams to make a grandiose historic movie. On the story-external level, Caranfil provides insight into the fragility and, at the same time, power of the arts to survive their own creators, wars and time. Overall, intertextuality marks the narrative, due to the allusions made to Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet*. The music soundtrack, composed by Laurent Couson, is interspersed with excerpts from Romanian folk music, which imprints some modernity and elegance on the movie narrative (in tune with the technological changes of the time, and the West), but also authenticity (rural Romanian) and resistance to change (the Romanian elite's attitude at the time). The camera frequently zooms in the characters' faces to capture the emotions that remain unexpressed through words.

### SYNOPSIS

Grig is a young artist whose admission to the Conservatory of Dramatic Arts is rejected on the grounds of his short height. He plans to make a movie about Romania's War of Independence when, one day, he is invited to Gaumonde movie production studio. Mr. Duffin, the head of the studio, offers Grig a small amount of money for his movie idea, but Grig turns it down and approaches Leon Negrescu, a wealthy businessman, whom he convinces to invest in his movie. It is in Leon's house that Grig meets and takes an instant liking to Emilia, an aspiring actress. After a series of stumbling blocks, Grig finishes the movie and, together with his partners, leaves for Paris to edit it in a professional studio. Back in Bucharest, Leon sells the movie to several investors, but sends Grig and his partners a letter stating the contrary. As a result, all the movie shareholders, except for Grig, surrender their rights to Leon in order to avoid

losing all the money. While still in Paris, Grig finds out about Leon's scheme and immediately returns to Bucharest. In solidarity with his friends, Grig hands Leon his own letter stating that he gives his shares to him, too.

The beginning of the First World War finds Bucharest occupied by the German army, Grig working as a dresser at the National Theater, and Leon in huge debts because of his reckless investment in the movie-making industry. In a moment of rage, Leon burns the movie tapes he stored in the basement of the Lyrical Theatre. The fire destroys the building and causes the death of Emilia, who happens to be the prima donna that evening. Leon's lawyer pleads insanity for his client and calls Grig as a witness of defense in court. Visibly ill, Grig states that he has always known Leon as a very sensible man. Grig dies of tuberculosis some years later, whereas Leon serves his sentence in a mental asylum for the rest of his life.

## MAIN CHARACTERS

<b>Grigore Ursache</b>	Grig is a young artist, lacking the looks of an actor, but with a keen interest in making movies.
<b>Iancu Ursache</b>	Grig's father is a well-acclaimed actor at the National Theatre.
<b>Leon Negrescu</b>	A wealthy businessman, Leon likes to see himself as a patron of the arts.
<b>Emilia</b>	A young woman who aspires to become an actress.
<b>Raymond Duffin</b>	The head of the Bucharest office of a French movie-making studio.
<b>Nutu Ferefide</b>	Nutuis The editor-in-chief of <i>The Epoch</i> paper, who later becomes Leon's lawyer.
<b>Aristizza Romanescu</b>	Aristizza is the one of the nation's most acclaimed actresses.

## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### **Grig**

Grig is a twenty-five-year-old artist, whose physical appearance does not help him to become an actor. He has a passionate interest in making movies. He is shy around women, like Emilia, but can become very fierce in defending his dream of making a movie and his directorial vision.

*Tenacious* Grig does not get discouraged by his father's threats and lack of funds for his movie. When he asks Leon to invest in his movie, and the latter dismisses his request, Grig immediately comes up with an idea to convince him: he invites Leon to the cinema to see his favorite actress in the moving pictures of Hamlet. As a result, Grig obtains Leon's financial support.

*Bold* Regardless of the constant teasing about his too big dreams at such a young age, Grig stands up for his ideals in the face of authority (his father, Leon, the King) in a dignified and even feisty manner when necessary. For example, when the King suggests what changes should be made to his film, Grig is not afraid to speak up and firmly remind him that the director is the one who makes such decisions. He also refuses to obey Leon's orders that he should consider the changes, even if that means his dismissal. Grig proudly turns his back on Leon and goes away, thus preferring not to abandon his movie rather than follow his orders.

*Revengeful* This character trait first emerges when he sees Emilia come into the restaurant in the company of Mr. Duffin's friend. Frustrated with his previous failed attempts to find her at the Conservatory, where she told him to look for her, and with her pretending not to know him now, Grig shocks everyone by throwing a pint of cold water on her. Later on in court, when Leon risks capital punishment if found guilty, Grig's statement contradicts his insanity plea. As he leaves the court, he looks into Leon's eyes and shrugs his shoulders nonchalantly.

### **Leon Negrescu**

Leon is a middle-aged tycoon who proclaims himself a patron of the arts. He has an overdramatic manner of speaking, especially during special occasions (for example, at Belcea's funeral or the movie premiere). For him, there is no room for friendship in business, patronizing everyone he collaborates with.

*Autocratic* Being in a position of power given by his wealth, Leon feels entitled to order everyone around him. There is one particular moment when he has sacked Grig for impertinence that shows his manner of dominating rather collaborating with his partners. He hires four retired army generals to add a more realistic note to a battlefield setting, but without consulting Grig.

*Unscrupulous* Leon shows no scruples when he sends his partners a letter in Paris with the aim of manipulating them into believing that the movie sale failed and then to transfer their movie shares to him to avoid ruin. When confronted about his scheme, Leon is rather disappointed by Grig's 'stupid' gesture of writing letter stating that he gives him his shares and Grig's lack of understanding that there is no such thing as friendship in business.

*Perceptive* Although initially dismissing the cinema for not being an equal of the theater, Leon changes his mind when he observes the audience's reactions while viewing a movie on Grig's invitation to the cinema. He decides to invest in Grig's movie because he senses that the world is heading towards a new direction and he needs to keep up

with the technological changes for his business to keep thriving.

### **Emilia**

Emilia is a beautiful young woman, who aspires to become an actress. Whenever she meets Grig, she displays an aura of mystery, which makes him fall for her. She turns up in the company of high-powered men like Mr. Duffin's friend, most likely because she hopes he will help her with her acting career.

*Opportunistic* Emilia appears to seize any opportunity that may help her fulfill her goal of becoming an actress. She does not hesitate to take advantage of Grig's getting flustered in her presence, and insinuates herself into his affection. She conveniently appears in one of the first shooting locations in the countryside when, after a passionate dance together, Grig spontaneously creates a supporting role for her in his movie.

*Sly* From their very first meeting, Emilia flirts with Grig as if attracted to him. When Grig sees her posing half-nude in Leon's house, she plays a mind-twisting game with him: pretending to feel hot, she asks him to fetch a glass of water, and then insists on him throwing the water on her. Her sensual reaction to the cold water dripping down her body is deliberately meant to subjugate Grig to her charms. Their paths cross again several times again, and then, she is nowhere to be found once he has fallen for her. One evening, when they run into each other at the restaurant, she orders water because it feels hot, not expecting Grig to lose his temper and throw water on her.

*Deceitful* Emilia deliberately lies to Grig on several occasions, playing the card of a hard-working woman who has to pose nude and baby sit in order to save money for her acting school fees. When, upon her invitation, Grig goes looking for her at the Conservatory of Dramatic Arts, where she said she was enrolled in the first year, he cannot find her name on the list of female actresses admitted to the program. He uses a sketch of her portrait to ask around the Conservatory about her, but nobody seems to have met her.

### THEMES

#### **SOCIETY**

**TECHNOLOGY** During one of his conversations with Grig, Leon expresses his admiration for the 'formidable times' they live in. He exclaims: 'What an epoch! All these inventions, the cinema! There is some divine grace in the air! Great people will be born!' Aristizza and Iancu Ursache eventually understand that the cinema is the technological counterpart of the theatre, that the two are not in competition but complete each other. Without her 'shadow'—she refers to the cinema as 'shadows on the wall'—being captured on the cinematic camera, Aristizza comes to realize that she risks being forgotten by future generations after her death. Iancu threatens to beat his son up with 'that movie grinder of his' (i.e., the camera) unless he finds a more honorable job. The King himself cannot see what the role of a director is in a movie. The Romanian elite are thus presented as quite conservative and reluctant to embrace the latest technological developments. In the absence of professional studios in Bucharest, Grig and his partners have to take their movie to Paris for its final editing. By contrast, Gaumonde (representing the Western world) is shown as being up to date with the latest developments and also open to the technological means to make movies fast.

**WAR** The theme of war is first addressed by Grigore Ursache (Grig), the director, whose ambition is to make an 'art movie' to celebrate thirty-five years since the Romanian War of Independence (1877-78). From Grig's perspective, the war should be glorified as a historic moment that he eagerly aims to show to the public through his camera and his directorial vision. Caranfil's movie follows Grig's story over a span of six years, including the time Bucharest was occupied by the German army during the First World War (1917). There is a particularly illustrative scene that points out the devastating effects of the war upon art and its creators. When Grig recognizes Emilia's nude portrait among others on the pavement during Aristizza's funeral procession, the former painter—now a businessman—bitterly says that there were times when he 'childishly' believed that he could make a living out of art, but that his paintings are now 'pre-historical'. He then adds that, because of the war, he has turned to the textile industry and sells tent fabric to the Germans. The war also causes Leon's ruin since the building that he bought to turn into the biggest cinema in Bucharest proves to be a complete loss. During the war, the place continues to function as a theatre, most likely because, just like Grig's father, people were still hesitant to accept the moving pictures at the time.

**ART/ CINEMA** The movie storyline follows the beginnings of the cinema in early 1900s in Bucharest when the National Theatre's grand artists like Aristizza and Iancu Ursache (Grig's father) grudgingly accept the increasing popularity of the moving pictures. For example, Iancu Ursache even threatens 'to break his son's back with 'that grinder [the movie camera] if he sees him any close to it again'. He thinks that jobs like cleaning the streets or selling fish are more honorable for Grig than the making of movies. 'How will I be able to go back on stage for applauses or say hello in the street with a son who makes movies?' he asks his son. Similarly, Aristizza appears indignant at the theatre losing ground to the cinema. However, she concedes that the cinema may prove its worth by immortalizing the great artists' faces for the next generations. On the other hand, after the success of Grig's movie, Leon Negrescu ends up losing all the money he invested in movies. Apart from the cinema, the movie explores how other forms of art such as painting and the theatre became obsolete because of the political-economic and technological changes at the beginning of the twentieth century.

## APPEARANCE

**DISHONESTY** The theme of dishonesty is especially explored when Leon Negrescu sends a letter to his partners—who were in Paris to have the film edited in a professional French studio—trying to deceive them into thinking that Grig's movie failed to attract any investors. Leon words his letter so skillfully that, with the exception of Grig, he makes everyone believe that they must accept Leon's offer of compensation for their shares or lose all their money by waiting for the film to fail. Despite Grig's plea for a little more patience, the partners take up Leon's offer, without waiting to return to Bucharest and make a decision on the spot. When Grig finds out about Leon's deceptive plan and goes to his house to hand him his own letter stating that he gives him his shares, Leon accepts it with disappointment, telling Grig that he is 'more foolish than he thought' because 'friendship is good only at parties', not in business. The theme of dishonesty is also examined in the scenes showing Emilia and Grig together. She adopts an alluring attitude towards him, especially after hearing that he plans to make a movie. Later on, Grig looks for her at the Dramatic Arts Conservatory, as she suggested, but nobody has seen her before. To his surprise and disappointment, he meets her again in the company of one of Mr. Duffin's friends at a restaurant.

## RELATIONSHIP

**LOYALTY/ DISLOYALTY** Grig and Leon are at opposite poles when it comes to their sense of loyalty. Grig is the epitome of loyalty on both the abstract (his dream of making movies) and factual levels (his friends), whereas Leon is the archetype of the eccentric and rather autocratic businessman, with few scruples of conscience in relation to his partners. A highly relevant example of this is Leon's letter to them after having received several offers for Grig's movie. Leon sends his partners—who were in Paris for the movie montage—a written message saying that the movie failed to sell and that it might be wiser for them to transfer ownership of shares to him in exchange of an immediate sum of money rather than risk losing all their money while waiting for the movie to be purchased. Conversely, Grig remains loyal to his principles even after he finds out about the success of his movie from Mr. Duffin and realizes Leon's deceitful scheme. When Grig, followed by a folk band, barges in Leon's house, the latter praises him for not having 'fled' their project 'as the others did' and is excited that it is just the two of them to enjoy the success of the movie now. Out of loyalty for his friends, Grig also hands in his letter stating that he agrees to pass his shares on to Leon.

**ATTRACTION / DESIRE** Although Grig is too shy to ever admit it to Emilia, he falls for her as soon as he sees her posing nude in Leon's house. When he meets her again in the countryside where the filming crew has gone for the first scenes of the movie, he first gets flustered, but then, hearing that she aims to become an actress, he instantaneously creates a part for her in his movie. In the evening scene showing Emilia swimming and Grig pretending to smoke impassively on the shore of the lake, his body language and tone definitely show that he is infatuated with her. They lose contact for some time, but one evening—after asking around the Conservatory about Emilia—Grig behaves like a jealous and betrayed man upon seeing her enter the restaurant in the company of Mr. Duffin's friend. To everyone's shock, the moment she orders water because it feels too hot in the room, he dips his beer pint in the champagne bucket and then throws the cold water on her (this time without her asking him to do it as happened in the nude-posing scene). Some years later, Grig is shown proudly hanging Emilia's nude painting on the wall of his house, and taking a step back to admire it.

**QUEST** The theme of dreams runs through the entire movie. One of the most illustrative examples is Grig's determination and remarkable resilience on pursuing his dream of making movies despite his father's strong disapproval. Moreover, Mr. Duffin and Leon do not take him very seriously because of his young age. Most importantly, Grig lacks the capital to make his movie. However, he shows no hesitation in approaching Leon for financial support or in standing up for his directorial vision whenever the situation requires it, as the case is, for example, in meeting the king. When the king suggests which actor should be more suitable for playing his younger self in Grig's movie, Leon and the other movie shareholders play along with him in a courteous and laudatory manner, whereas Grig stands up for his directorial choices and contradicts the king. A little later, when Leon angrily tells Grig off for having been impertinent to the king and demands that all the changes advised by the king be made, Grig refuses to give in. Not even Leon firing him stops Grig from following his dream closely. Thus, when one of the battlefield scenes turns into a total fiasco because of Leon's decisions, Grig is there, patiently waiting for Leon to realize he cannot make the film without him.

## PAST

**PAST** Grig's movie about the Romanian War of Independence seeks to highlight how the past defines the present. The historic past is presented in glorious terms, emphasizing the idea that without the self-sacrifice and bravery of the nation's heroes in the past, the present and future generations would not have the chance to enjoy freedom and live in an independent state. On the extradiegetic level, Caranfil's movie explores the theme of the past in terms of the clash between generations. The characters of Grig and Emilia represent the young generation, open and eager to embrace the technological changes at the beginning of the twentieth century. By contrast, the characters of Iancu Ursache (Grig's father), Aristizza, and Leon Negrescu, who belong to the older generation, initially show resistance to these changes, which they see as a threat to 'real values and art'. For young artists like Grig, the past is not an emotionally charged memory, but rather a source of intellectual curiosity, a unique 'reenactment of the war events'. On the other

hand, for Grig's father, Aristizza and Leon, the past is an important part of their lived experience and rise to fame through hard work, things that now risks becoming obsolete unless they adapt to the changing times more readily.

**MEMORY** The scene of the Vidin battle reconstitution in which the army generals, invited by Leon to add a realistic note on the movie, start arguing over their remembering the event differently, subtly hints at the fragile and subjective nature of human memory and its tendency to forgetfulness. The underlying message of Caranfil's movie is that only art (especially the theatre and the cinema) is powerful enough to withstand the test of time. As Aristizza reluctantly comes to admit to Grig, the cinema, by 'projecting shadows on the wall', will ensure the survival of the memory of her colleagues' and her own artistic grandeur with the future generations. The movie ends with a scene of a stage where an actor playing Hamlet recites the Shakespearian character's enduring monologue and its famous last words, 'The rest is silence'. This scene is reflective of how Shakespeare's art has managed to cross the boundaries of time and place throughout centuries. The scene is then followed by two screen shots of 'inter-titles', the former, referring to Grig's and Leon's tragic fate, and the latter, revealing that 'the movie has survived'. It all points to the conclusion that, in Caranfil's vision, the theater and the cinema contribute—each in its own way—to the art memorability beyond the passage of time and transient nature of artists' lives.

**TRANSIENCE** Indeed, this theme of transience runs through Caranfil's movie from the beginning to the end. Leon Negrescu is the protagonist who has moments of reflection about the transient nature of things and human beings on various occasions. First, he turns up at the funeral of Ion Belcea (a national artist, whose sudden death when he was only in his 40s shocked everyone) and gives a dramatic speech, which is an adaptation of an excerpt from Hamlet's monologue. He starts with the question 'To be or not to be?', but his speech turns into a meaningless ranting, 'To die...to die?', until he can no longer find his words. Another example is when the Gaumonde movie tapes are set on fire and Leon muses: 'the movie...how easily flammable it is! Can something durable be made out of such a fragile thing?' The same Leon, sitting on a bench in the woods, tells Grig (who was expecting to find Emilia there) that he is there to meditate. Leon reflects out loud on how insignificant human existence is compared to the universe. The end of the movie points to the binary opposites: the transience of money, fame and personal ambition versus the immortality of art.

## **FLAWS**

**GREED** The theme of greed is addressed in terms of both wealth and ego. It is reflected in Leon's Negrescu's considerable fortune that, as can be inferred from his actions, may have been made by deceiving others. One relevant example in this sense is his letter misleading his partners to sell their shares cheaply to him. Leon's approach to business is entirely pragmatic and oriented only to self-benefit. When Grig barges into his house, visibly troubled by his recent discovery of this scam, Leon lectures Grig that in business there is no room for sentimentalism or loyalty to friends. Leon's greed does not stop here, though. Some years later, the First World War finds him struggling financially because of his massive investment in movies and the purchase of a national heritage building, which he aims to turn into the biggest cinema in Bucharest. Leon's greediness also emerges from his constant need to be in the centre of attention. For example, he invites himself to give pompous speeches in front of crowds (Belcea's funeral and movie premiere), controls the press and the police to serve his own interests, and hardly ever treats his partners as equals. Thus, he is interested not only in money, but also in the adulation and power that comes with it.

## SCENES

**Admission results** A professor comes into the waiting room with the results of the admission exam to the Drama School. He explains to the young candidates that, apart from talent, the theatre requires an imposing build and good looks. Grigore Ursache (Grig) rushes in the room a little later, urging the professor to speed up his speech as he has an important meeting to attend.



**The funeral** Members of the public and theatre colleagues attend the funeral of Ion Belcea, an actor at the National Theatre. During the burial service, Grig tells his father that he has failed the entrance exam at the Drama School on the grounds that he was too short. Leon Negrescu, a rich art investor, delivers a dramatic speech at the graveside, resembling Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' soliloquy.



**An unexpected invite** Grig is directing a love scene in a warehouse when a man comes in and invites him to a meeting with Mr. Duffin, the director of Gaumonde. After being shown some movies that Gaumonde has made about important political events in Romania, Grig is surprised to hear that Mr. Duffin knows about his plan to make a movie on the Romanian War of Independence.





**The offer** Mr. Duffin and his assistant laugh at Grig's enthusiasm about his new movie, and ask him whether he has got the finances for such an ambitious project at his age. Grig says that he has hoped that Gaumonde will be interested in investing in his movie. The director replies that Grig is too young, and proposes him a 'comfortable amount of pocket money' in exchange for his idea, but Grig turns it down.



**A father-son dispute** Grig is behind the curtains at the theatre where his father gets a standing ovation for his performance. Grig's father tells him that jobs like selling fish or sweeping the streets are more 'honorable' than his making moving pictures. The father continues to say that he will not allow his son to shame the name he has built up over thirty years of hard work at the theatre.





**A possible investor** In the theatre lobby Grig overhears some people say that Leon Negrescu—also present but engaged in another conversation—offers financial support for a bunch of failed artists that he hosts in his house. A little later, Grig pays Leon Negrescu an announced visit.



**Emilia** While waiting for Leon Negrescu to turn up, Grig looks around the house. In one of the rooms he sees a beautiful young woman, posing half nude for some painters. She asks Grig to bring her a glass of water because she feels very hot. When she insists, he throws the water on her. While following the painters into the dining hall, Grig finds out from one of the painters that the young woman's name is Emilia.



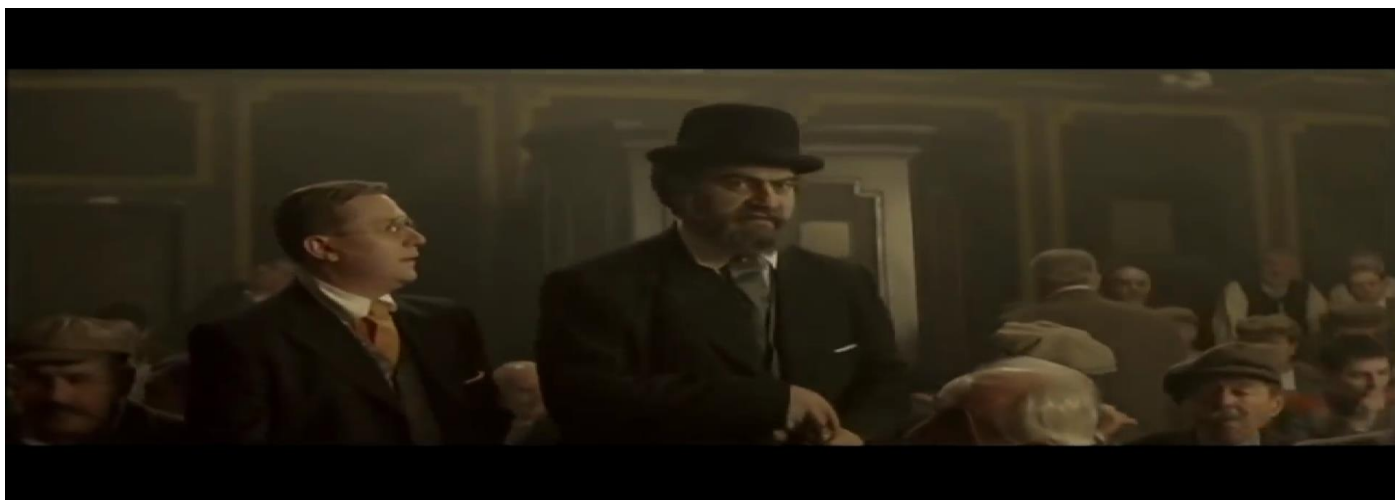
**An awkward first meeting** Leon Negrescu makes a dramatic entrance in the dining hall, wearing a Roman toga. Grig introduces himself and says that he has come to ask for his advice. Leon jokingly asks Grig if it is a recent trend in the theatre for 'babies' to get dramatic roles. Trying to answer in kind, Grig teases Leon for wearing clothes that look like diapers. Everyone goes quiet at his comment, and Grig leaves the room, apologizing for disturbing them.



**The talk** Leon follows Grig out of the dining room, yelling at the top of his voice that an artist has to 'grow thick skin' if he wants to survive. He then gives Grig a lecture on life, money and art, but shows no interest in investing in Grig's movie because he thinks that the cinema is not an art form like the theatre. Grig arouses his curiosity though when he invites him to the cinema to see Divine Sarah, a famous French actress, in the film of *Hamlet*, which, to Leon's surprise, has the words in 'inter-titles'.



**At the cinema** Leon has a panic attack when he realizes that the cinema is full of poor people. Grig insists on him staying a little longer. The audience reactions at the comic moving pictures eventually make Leon relax and laugh, too. Then everyone goes quiet as the Hamlet movie begins, and a slide with a message ('Leon, trust this boy') appears on the screen. Leon stands up stunned and agrees to invest in Grig's movie.



**Celebrating the contract** While Leon, Grig and three other shareholders celebrate the signing of the contract, Grig's father rushes into the room, drunk and angry with his son. The father chases Grig around the room to beat him up, but Leon intervenes and scolds him for his loutish behavior and inability to see how 'talented' his son is. He then asks Grig's father to leave.





**Shooting the first scene** Grig and his filming crew go to the countryside to shoot the first scene of the movie, in which a group of farmers perform a traditional Romanian dance. Emilia suddenly shows up among the dancers and pulls Grig inside the dancing circle. When Grig hears that Emilia wants to become an actress, he spontaneously comes up with the idea that Emilia could play the role of Penes Curcanul (a heroic figure in the film about the Romanian War of Independence).



**The evening party** The filming crew is having dinner outside when Leon excuses himself and leaves the table. In the meanwhile, Grig and Emilia are together by a lake in the woods. Emilia swims naked in the lake while Grig smokes on the shore. They hear voices and footsteps coming from the woods and Emilia suggests that they should hide and meet on the other side of the lake. Grig walks there, but runs into Leon, who is sitting on a bench. Leon gives Grig an eloquent speech about how times are changing due to the latest inventions and the cinema.



**A shocking discovery** Grig, Leon and their movie partners return to the city when Grig notices a movie advert poster by Gaumonde. He is appalled to see that the French movie company has appropriated his idea about the Romanian War of Independence from the Ottoman Empire and made a movie about it.



**The phone call** Leon makes a phone call to *The Epoch* editorial department and demands that Nutu Ferefide, the editor-in-chief, make a detailed and compromising investigation into Gaumonde's movie if he still wants his support to get accepted to law school.



**The investigation report** Leon gets an update from Ferefide and tells his partners—waiting for news in Leon's office—that Gaumonde is compromised because they have worked with a Jewish theatre company. Grig cannot see why that is a problem, but Leon replies that he is 'not ripe enough to understand' (between 1918 -1920, when modern Romania was created, there was an anti-semitic wave amongst the Romanian elite). Leon asks his assistant to call the police.





**Gaumont's movie** Ferefade and the police prefect go to talk to Mr. Duffin. The prefect demands to see Gaumont's movie. While watching, he makes some negative remarks about the Jewish actors in the movie. Ferefade adds that the two actors playing his Royal Majesty and the Prime Minister are the Bloomenfeld brothers, famous for their burlesque shows, and thus, a serious offence to the royal family. The prefect orders his subordinates to confiscate the movie reels.



**The destruction of the Gaumont's movie** Leon enters the prefect's office, saying that the Royal Palace should be informed about his prompt action of saving it from public humiliation. When Leon wonders what to do with the movie, the prefect suggests burning. A little later, Leon sits by the burning reels and reflects on the transient nature of film.



**A royal call** Leon, Grig and their movie partners have a meeting with Carol I, King of Romania. The king expresses his contentment with Leon's undertaking to make a movie about the Romanian War of Independence, but says that the actor chosen to play Osman Pasha, the Ottoman ruler, is more suitable to play his part (i.e., the king). Grig tells the king that he is the director and the one who makes such decisions, but Leon quickly interrupts him and thanks the king for his 'valuable' advice. The king is puzzled because he cannot understand the role of a director.



**Getting fired** Leon, Grig and Tony, the actor whom the king found suitable to play his younger self, have a beer together at an open air restaurant in the park. Leon is livid with Grig because of his impertinent attitude towards the king and decides what changes should be made. Grig protests vehemently and says that his movie is about the war not the king. In an outburst of anger, Leon fires Grig.



**A chance encounter** Grig stands among the audience listening to the music played by a military band in the park when Emilia appears. She invites him for a walk and he sees that she pushes a baby stroller. Grig insinuates that she is the child's mother, but she immediately replies that she is just the babysitter. When a Roma woman in the street says that the baby may not be his, but is certainly hers, Emilia suddenly pretends to be in a rush and tells him to look for her at the Conservatory.





**The Vidin battle scene** Grig prepares a battle scene when four retired army generals approach him. Without consulting Grig, Leon has hired them to make the scene more realistic. The entire scene becomes chaos because the generals argue for hours as they remember the war events differently. Leon finally turns up, fires the generals, and nods apologetically towards Grig.



**Shooting the battle scenes** In charge again, Grig gives enthusiastic directorial directions on how the main actors and background extras should proceed for the combat scene. Later, he looks for Emilia at the Dramatic Arts Conservatory, but her name is not on the list of female students in the first year, which contradicts what she told him. He uses her pencil portrait to ask around about her, but nobody seems to know who she is.



**An eventful evening** Grig is drinking beer with some friends in a restaurant when he notices Mr. Duffin take a seat at another table. Grig goes to talk with Mr. Duffin, who is waiting for some friends. Grig is surprised to see that Mr. Duffin's friend comes in accompanied by Emilia. A man approaches Grig to tell him that Aristizza, a well-acclaimed actress, wants to have a word with him. When Emilia orders a glass of water because she feels hot, Grig dips his glass into the champagne bucket and throws cold water on her. He then excuses himself because he has an important meeting to attend.





***The great dame of the Romanian theatre*** Grig enters a private dining room at the restaurant where Aristizza is waiting for him. Even though Aristizza despises 'the moving shadows on walls', (i.e., the cinema), she sees its potential for helping the future generations remember the great actors even long after they are gone, so she agrees to appear in his movie. Grig is initially taken aback by her speech, but plays along and insists on capturing her great talent in his movie.



**A dramatic scene** Aristizza ignores the pouring rain as she focuses to get into character while the perplexed filming crew watch her from a field shed. Grig cannot put the filming off for another day due to the fact Aristizza, who is too caught up in the role she thinks she has, refuses to leave. The camera breaks down because of the wet weather, but one of Grig's partners suggests that they should pretend to shoot the scene. Grig shouts 'action' and Aristizza improvises a dramatic mother-son farewell monologue.



**The trip to Paris** Leon sees Grig and the partners off to the station and asks them to send him the negative of the movie so that he can then try to sell it. Several reels are posted from Paris to Leon's address in Bucharest. The fact that the movie is two hours long infuriates Leon as he thinks nobody will be interested in buying it. To his surprise, he receives numerous offers.



**Leon's letter** Back in Paris, Grig and his partners receive a letter from Leon saying that the movie was a fiasco, proposing that each shareholder pass 'their property rights and responsibilities' to him or 'risk ruin' while waiting for the movie to be sold. All the partners, except for Grig, accept Leon's proposal.



**The truth comes out** Grig is at the Gaumonde Studios in Paris to find a job as an extra in one of their movies when he runs into Mr. Duffin. Mr. Duffin tells Grig that he cannot understand his presence there instead of being in Bucharest to celebrate the success of his movie. On realizing Leon's scam, Grig returns to Bucharest in a hurry.



**Confronting Leon** Drunk and followed by a Romanian folk band, Grig barges into Leon's house in the middle of the night. Leon congratulates him on not giving up on his rights as easily as the others. Without saying a word, Grig takes Leon by surprise when he hands him his letter stating that he gives his shares to him. He then leaves the house with the band playing a sad song behind him.





**The movie premiere** Leon makes a patriotic speech on the night of the premiere, without any reference to the director. Grig is in the audience and smiles bitterly. During the movie, the viewers' reactions vary from cheering the Romanian army to weeping and going silent at scenes showing the Romanian soldiers dying on the battlefield. Grig's father taps him on the shoulder, giving him an approving and proud nod.



**Five years later (1917)** Bucharest is under the German occupation. While attending Aristizza's funeral procession, Grig notices Emilia's nude among some paintings on the pavement across the street, so he asks the owner if he could buy it. The former painter, now dressed up in a business suit, gives him the painting for free, saying that art is a 'long-forgotten affair'. Grig carries the painting happily while rejoining the funeral cortege.





**The deadly fire** Emilia is a lead opera singer in a play that Leon also watches from the balcony. Leon's assistant warns him about his enormous debts and reckless spending on worthless things like the theatre he wants to build. Leon says that he has hoped to turn into a big cinema, and leaves the hall distressed. He goes in the basement and sets all the movie reels on fire, which destroys the building and kills Emilia.



**The trial** Leon stands in court accused of deliberately setting the fire which not only caused the death of Emilia and destroyed a historic building, but also raised suspicions that it was intended as an attack against the German generals who were in the audience at that time. Leon's lawyer (*The Epoch's* former editor-in-chief) makes an insanity plea, and calls Grig to back it up. Grig, however, states that Leon has always been a sensible man.

