A film by **NAYRA ILIC GARCÍA**

CUERPO CELESTE



Pressbook 2025



CUERPO CELESTE

CHILE, ITALY | 97 MIN | SPANISH | DRAMA, COMING OF AGE | COLOR | 7.1 DOLBY | 2.35:1

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Planta Cine
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LOGLINE

In the summer of 1990, as the Chilean dictatorship nears its end, a family begins to fall apart. At fifteen, a girl searches for her place in a world where everything she knew is slipping away.



SYNOPSIS

Summer, 1990. As Chile’s dictatorship draws to a close, fifteen-year-old Celeste spends the holidays with her family on a remote beach by the Atacama Desert. When an event shatters her adolescence and sends her mother into a downward spiral, their world begins to shift.

Months later, drawn by the promise of a solar eclipse, Celeste returns to that same place, but nothing is the same. In a country on the brink of transformation, she must navigate her own path forward.





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 2017, the person I had loved the most died in my arms. My world froze, and my heart stopped in that embrace. My sense of time became familiar with the time of the dead, and suddenly I felt myself split into two, able to cross into that world with ease. At the threshold, I understood that transcendence lives in memories, outside of time. So I began to remember.

I grew up in the Atacama Desert during the Pinochet dictatorship, and despite the suffering around us, my family and friends created a bubble where we could be free, in the middle of the desert, close to nature and within our nomadic world. We walked long stretches of beach at sunset knowing we wouldn't encounter anyone. Safety lived in that isolation and protected us from fear. But the bubble burst when the same desert that had sheltered us revealed itself as a violent and ominous place, keeping the most horrifying secrets of the dictatorship's agents.

Memories rise to speak not only of a time, but also of mourning. Death is never natural for those of us who remain, and that tense balance between life and death is the body of this film, an ambivalent force that Celeste, a teenager in 1990s Chile, must try to unravel.

Cuerpo Celeste, a kind of nomadic passage through the desert, is also perhaps a threshold space in the midst of a failed and painful transition in an uneasy country. It is the journey of a family, and especially of Celeste, who in her search for a direction, will discover a new territory of her own.

For me, making films is about following questions that, along the way, begin to uncover traces of another way of seeing the world.

—Nayra Ilic García. (may, 2025)



A CONVER-SATION WITH NAYRA ILIC GARCÍA

What emotional impact do you want to have on the audience? What idea of the world do you want them to take away?

The truth is that when I approached the writing of this film, I began to delve into different films set in rugged, textured, and violent landscapes that speak to the fragility of their characters in times of change. That tension was overwhelming to me and still leaves me full of questions. Sans toit ni loi by Agnès Varda, Nomadland by Chloé Zhao, Beau Travail by Claire Denis, and Paris, Texas by Wim Wenders were references I returned to constantly. I would like to evoke in the audience the same contrasting emotions I felt when I watched those films. That the audience travels with the film in a kind of drifting tension, like a murmur or perhaps like a memory being released.

Why this producer?

A Fernando Bascuñan lo había conocido en Brlab, I had met Fernando Bascuñán at BrLab; we were both producers on diferent projects, and years later, when I ran into him again and told him about the film, he was fascinated. He read the script and believed completely in the strength of the story. Fernando has that kind of magic that makes things happen with elegance and sensibility. It was very important to me that he joined the project with Planta, because later, when Úrsula Budnik came on board with Horamágica, the project gained even more strength thanks to her great vision. Their drive, together with Luigi Chimienti and Alessandro Amato from dispàrte, the Italian co production company that never let go of the film, in co-production with Oro Films from Chile, led us to a collaboration that was both creative and productive, and brought the film to its best version. It has been very special, as we've also been fortunate that Intramovies, our sales agent, fell in love with the project early on and supported us at key moments.

How long have you been working on the project? How did the idea come about?

It took me seven years from the moment I wrote the first draft to the day Cuerpo Celeste was completed. I was inspired by memories from my childhood, by profound experiences that made me see the world differently, and by a turbulent time in Chile. I went through several development labs such as the Torino Film Lab and Cine Chileno del Futuro at FICValdivia. I received guidance from Sebastián Lelio and Soledad Salfate, and the unconditional friendship of Natalia Geisse, who led the production design and created the most beautiful art decks we submitted to different funding calls. Little by little, a team began to take shape that persevered alongside me and helped me face the challenges this film entailed.

Why these collaborators (actors, director of photography, etc.)? How will you shoot it or how did you shoot it?

I always imagined the film being told with few shots and a fixed camera, with a sense of liminal time. To feel that remote time passing, to hear the distance of sound traveling, to allow the actors to be and become the characters within that vastness. With Sergio Armstrong, the director of photography and camera operator, we had long meetings where we talked, laughed, and looked at references. We enjoyed ourselves searching for the film. We wanted to feel that the film vibrated in stillness. We understood that the focus was Celeste's gaze. Sometimes it could see everything, and at other times it had a hyper-perception of the world through very precise details.

Natalia Geisse's production design recreated a camp inspired by photographs from my childhood in the north, carefully matching the desert's color palette with the atmosphere of a washed-out Chile from the 1990s.

Helen Mrugalski, the lead actress in Cuerpo Celeste, carried the weight of the film. At just 14 years old, she was in almost every scene during the shoot. With a natural intuition for acting, she moved through the film with depth and great professionalism. Helen could shift from total





candor to a very surprising wisdom in her gaze. I love working with actors. I love their ability to play and fully give themselves to a role. With Daniela Ramírez, the co-star, the encounter was very profound, full of admiration and complicity. I believe that energy was something we experienced with the whole cast. We laughed a lot and also cried as we built the scenes together. During the shoot, we let go of everything we had talked about so the characters could emerge in that desert, on that beach, in that environment.

The editing was an immersion. With Valeria Hernández, we saw the shift from winter to spring in the editing room. We watched hours and hours of material and talked until we reached the essence of the film. This was very challenging, especially since we also participated in the Work in Progress LATAM at San Sebastián, which we were fortunate to win. That confirmed we were getting closer to the film.

The sound design with Roberto Espinoza was another journey. We spent almost four months working on the sound of the desert, an exercise in sonic expansion and intimacy with the wind and the earth. But if the desert had a sound that crackled and whistled, what was Celeste's sound? David Tarantino's musical composition complemented this inner journey.

What was the most challenging part of filming, pre- or post-production?

I think the most challenging part was convincing people that this story deserved to be filmed in the north, where I am from and where the film was inspired. For that, I had to push against all odds until everyone clearly saw how essential this place-based cinema was. It couldn't have taken place anywhere else. From a production and directing standpoint, it meant shooting in a completely isolated area in the middle of the Atacama coastal desert, with no access to electricity or water. We had to build the film's camp, as well as another for the crew. Being able to work in such a special and rarely filmed location was overwhelming, and both the cast and crew deeply appreciated the effort it required. Today, I truly believe it was worth it. We all needed to feel the magnetism of the desert in order to film Cuerpo Celeste.

CAST & CREW BIOS

HELEN MRUGALSKI CELESTE

Helen Mrugalski is a Chilean actress who began her career at the age of seven, playing the role of Sofía in the TV series ***Sres. Papis*** (2016). Since then, she has appeared in several television productions including ***Casa de Muñecos***, ***Edificio Corona***, ***Demente***, and ***Hasta Encontrarte***. She has also been part of notable series such as ***El Presidente*** (Amazon Prime) and ***Poemas Malditos***, in which she starred in one of the four episodes.

In ***Cuerpo Celeste***, she makes her film debut at age 15 in a leading role, and is currently shooting her second feature film as the lead.





NICOLÁS CONTRERAS

JANO

Nicolás Contreras (Santiago, Chile, 1996), also known by his stage name Niko Kont, is a Chilean actor and musician with a prominent international projection. At 28 years old, he has established himself as one of the rising stars of Latin American audiovisual arts. He rose to fame after starring in the Netflix original series ***Baby Bandito***, inspired by true events. The show's second season is set to premiere soon, following the success of its first installment.

His acting talent has opened doors to major international productions. He recently appeared in ***The House of the Spirits***, an adaptation of Isabel Allende's acclaimed novel, produced by FilmNation for Amazon Prime. Directed by Andrés Wood, Kont stars alongside renowned actors such as ***Poncho Herrera, Nicole Wallace, and Fernanda Urrejola***.

At the same time, he is developing a solo music career in the indie folk/pop genre, where he has created a distinctive fusion of music and acting. This artistic integration is evident in his role in the feature film ***Cuerpo Celeste***, where he plays the charismatic Jano. In this film, he also composed and performed the original song "Ojos Celestes," a piece that highlights his creative sensitivity and versatility as an artist.

Niko Kont stands out as a fresh and authentic voice in the Latin American cultural scene, with a career on the rise in both acting and music.

NAYRA ILIC GARCÍA
WRITER / DIRECTOR

Chilean director, screenwriter, and professor. Her debut feature film, ***Metro Cuadrado*** (2011), won an award at FIC Valdivia and had its world premiere at the Palm Springs International Film Festival. ***Cuerpo Celeste***, her second feature, was selected for the Torino Film Lab and the co-production forums of the San Sebastián, Málaga, and FICValdivia festivals, winning the WIP Latam award at San Sebastián. With over a decade of teaching experience, she has taught at Chile's leading universities.





FERNANDO BASCUÑÁN
PRODUCER

Fernando Bascuñán is a filmmaker specialized in executive production. In 2010, he founded PLANTA, a production company that aims to combine emerging voices with established talent. He has produced the feature films ***Simón de la Montaña*** by Federico Luis (Grand Prix – Critics' Week, Cannes 2024); ***La práctica*** by Martín Rejtman (Official Competition, San Sebastián International Film Festival 2023); ***Los Colonos*** by Felipe Gálvez (FIPRESCI Prize – Un Certain Regard, Cannes Film Festival 2023); ***Vida de familia*** by Alicia Scherson and Cristián Jiménez (Sundance Film Festival – Rotterdam International Film Festival 2017); and ***Las analfabetas*** by Moisés Sepúlveda (Critics' Week, Venice Film Festival 2013); as well as the short film ***Rapaz*** (Critics' Week, Cannes Film Festival 2018), also directed by Felipe Gálvez.

He previously worked as executive producer at Quijote Films, where he produced over ten films, including B***lanco en blanco*** by Theo Court (Best Director and FIPRESCI Prize, Venice Film Festival – Orizzonti 2019); ***Las criaturas que se derriten bajo el sol*** by Diego Céspedes (Critics' Week, Cannes Film Festival 2022); and ***Blanquita*** by Fernando Guzzoni (Best Screenplay, Venice Film Festival – Orizzonti 2022). He currently produces projects under the PLANTA banner and serves as Executive Director of FIDOCS – Santiago International Documentary Film Festival.



ÚRSULA BUDNIK
PRODUCER

An executive Producer with a distinguished career in the audiovisual field, Ursula founded **Horamágica** in January 2003, through which she has developed a wide range of projects.
Among her early work are the production of Sebastián Lelio's debut feature ***La sagrada familia*** and his second film, Navidad. She later advanced her career as executive producer on TV series such as ***Volver a mí***, ***Los archivos del cardenal***, and ***Sitiados***. In 2023, she oversaw the executive production of ***Los mil días de Allende***.

She has also served as executive producer for the **FICV** and **FIDOCS** film festivals.

Currently, she is the Executive Director of Alga, a film residency program dedicated to cinematic education and training.

In collaboration with the production company Planta, she is currently in post-production on the feature film ***Cuerpo Celeste***, directed by Nayra Ilic García, winner of the EGEDA Platino Industria Award for Best WIP Latam at the San Sebastián Film Festival.

Together with Augusto Matte and Fernando Bascuñán, she co-founded **Máquina**, a production initiative currently producing Daemon, the debut feature by director Valeria Hoffman.

CAST

Helen Mrugalski - Celeste
Daniela Ramírez - Consuelo
Néstor Cantillana - Alonso
Mariana Loyola - Ema
Nicolás Contreras - Jano
Clemente Rodríguez - Simón



CREW

DIRECCIÓN Y GUION – Nayra Ilic García
DIRECCIÓN DE FOTOGRAFÍA – Sergio Armstrong A.C.C.
EDICIÓN – Valentina Hernández
DISEÑO DE PRODUCCIÓN – Natalia Geisse
MÚSICA ORIGINAL – David Tarantino
DISEÑO Y MEZCLA DE SONIDO – Roberto Espinoza
DISEÑO DE VESTUARIO – Paola Mendoza
MAQUILLAJE – Claudia Mariman

PRODUCERS

Fernando Bascuñán & Úrsula Budnik
CO-PRODUCTORES
Luigi Chimienti, Alessandro Amato, Dominga Ortúzar, Florencia

PRODUCTION COMPANIES

COMPAÑÍAS PRODUCTORAS:
Planta & Horamágica
COMPAÑÍAS CO-PRODUCTORAS:
dispàrte, Oro Films

WORLD SALES

Intramovies

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PARTICIPATED IN

Cine Chileno del Futuro, FIC Valdivia, Feature Lab & Extended Torino Film Lab, Foro de Coproducción Europa – América Latina & WIP Latam - SSIFF, MAFF & MAFIZ - Festival de Málaga, WEMW This is IT

PLANTA & HORAMÁGICA PRESENT A CO-PRODUCTION WITH DISPÀRTE & ORO FILMS SUPPORTED BY FONDO DE FOMENTO AUDIOVISUAL – MINCAP, MINISTERO DELLA CULTURA – DIREZIONE GENERALE CINEMA E AUDIOVISIVO, PROGRAMA IBERMEDIA, CORFO IN ASSOCIATION WITH TRÉBOL FILM, ATÓMICA, 101 INTERNATIONAL SALES INTRAMOVIES WITH HELEN MRUGALSKI AND THE SPECIAL PARTICIPATION OF DANIELA RAMÍREZ, NÉSTOR CANTILLANA AND MARIANA LOYOLA DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY SERGIO ARMSTRONG A.C.C PRODUCTION DESIGN NATALIA GEISSE COSTUME DESIGN PAOLA MENDOZA EDITING VALERIA HERNÁNDEZ ORIGINAL SCORE DAVID TARANTINO SOUND DESIGN & MIX ROBERTO ESPINOZA ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS DANIEL HAMMER, CRISTIAN JIMÉNEZ, GONZALO CARRACEDO, GABRIEL CÁCERES CO-PRODUCED BY LUIGI CHIMIENTI, ALESSANDRO AMATO, DOMINGA ORTÚZAR & FLORENCIA RODRÍGUEZ PRODUCED BY FERNANDO BASCUÑÁN & ÚRSULA BUDNIK WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY NAYRA ILIC GARCÍA