

## Sânziana - Press Kit

[www.sanzianafilms.com](http://www.sanzianafilms.com)

**Genre:** Psychological Suspense/Mythological Drama

### Short-short synopsis/blurb:

Take the trip in this contemporary exploration of a young woman's trials to overcome childhood trauma; *Sânziana* blends psychological suspense with the haunting allure of mythology, symbolism and dark fairytales.

### Short Synopsis:

*Sânziana* is a 12:21 minutes female-led psychological suspense film with Romanian mythological influences. It follows the story of Ileana, who chased by nightmares at night and a stalker by day, journeys through the realm of the dreaming and the everyday streets of life finding the allies to guide her back to self in order to face the demons of her past and confront the villains in her present.

Ileana's story unfolds across the shifting landscapes of dreams and reality, each mirroring the other in their dangers and opportunities for healing.

It evokes themes of the cyclical nature of feminine wisdom, the transformative power of myth and mentorship, mental health and overcoming trauma.

**Anecdote:** After waking from her first nightmare, Ileana shows her finger to the work clothes hanging from her chest of drawers, representing another source of distress—her job. It illustrates how trauma can bleed into and negatively affect other area of one's life.

**Medium synopsis:**

*Sânziana* is an evocative exploration of childhood trauma and resilience as Ileana navigates a labyrinth of nightmares and invasive relationships guided by the Romanian Goddess Sânziana at night and a therapist by day, weaving together myth, psychological realism and contemporary issues.

The three narrative acts are marked by a dream and a daily life sequence.

The dreaming world involves a bridge of increasing value—bronze, silver, and gold—symbolising her psychological progress, thresholds between trauma and recovery, past, present and future, fear and hope. The Romanian Goddess appears as teacher-aid in her dream, shifting through maiden, mother, and crone; it's the cyclical nature of a woman's life and the wisdom acquired through each phase. The Bear, evolving from brown to black to white, serves as a metaphor for the confrontation and integration of hidden truths.

In parallel, in the waking world Ileana faces threats and the invasiveness of being stalked by her ex while struggling in a vicious cycle of people-pleasing relationships. The involvement of a friend therapist grounds her transformation in psychological realism, while the mythological and archetypal layers in her dreams add depth and universality to her experience. By making the "villain" both an external force outlined as the stalker (the world/social structure) and an internal one (the Bear), it creates a layered conflict that resonates on both personal and societal levels.

**Anecdote:** Ileana confronts her stalker on a real bridge, a parallel to facing the inner "demon" on the metaphoric crossing in her nightmares; it reflects the story's dual-synergy derived approach.

**Long synopsis:**

*Sânziana* depicts Ileana's journey as she confronts a deep-seated trauma stemming from childhood sexual assault. This psychological-myth narrative delves into the impact of her past in the present, manifesting in intrusive romantic relationships and a negative self-image. Through a unique blend of mythological elements and modern mental health therapies, Ileana's story unfolds as a heroine's journey that traverses the dream world and reality, guiding her toward her authentic self, healing and inner strength.

**Act 1: The Marshes of Memory/The Descend into Darkness (Bronze Bridge, Brown Bear, The Romanian Goddess Sânziana as Maiden).**

Ileana is haunted by nightmares and stalked in real life. She is isolated, her trauma unspoken, her self-worth low, but hope and unguarded intrinsic feminine intuition — The Romanian Goddess Sânziana — points her in the right direction, apparently into danger.

**Act 2: The Silver Veil of Transformation (Silver Bridge, Black Bear, Sânziana as Mother):**

She begins to seek help, finding allies and learning to confront her fears. The Bear is the raw, untamed force of repressed trauma. The bridge is more valuable. She nurtures her resilience and understanding of her trials in the guiding principle of Sânziana as Mother.

**Act 3: The Golden Dawn of Empowerment (Gold Bridge, White Bear, Sânziana as Crone):**

Ileana faces her stalker and her deepest fears. The gold bridge symbolises self-realisation and a culmination of her healing journey. She taps into the archetypal wisdom of universal womanhood, the Crone, and emerges with a sense of renewal, her trauma addressed. Through myth and folklore, *Sânziana* is not just a story of overcoming trauma, it's a celebration of the feminine spirit and the universal journey towards self-empowerment.

**Anecdote:** The Bear is not only one of the most culturally significant animals in Romania and deeply intrinsic to the protagonist's identity, but it also embodies the Catalyst archetype—a tipping point that propels Ileana to take both symbolic and concrete steps toward moving on.

**Directed by**

**Daniela Stemate**



**Daniela Stemate** is a debut British-Romanian producer, writer, and director in the Fantasy genre, her storytelling style deeply influenced by her Romanian heritage and a childhood shaped by her grandfather's tales of folklore and mythology—stories once banned during the communist era. Daniela has a BA (Hons) in Creative Writing and she's the founder of SânzianaFilms, a production company based in Greenwich, London.

Driven to explore the uncomfortable truths of humanity through fantastical narratives, she is currently making her directorial debut with the short film *Sânziana* and developing a pilot for a fantasy TV series where the mythical collides with a perplexing and ostentatious modern world in a dire quest for power and supremacy—across Earth and the realms above and below

Daniela's work passionately blends the mythical with contemporary narratives, offering fresh perspectives on timeless themes.



## Main Cast

### Francesca Amura -- *Ileana*



**Francesca Amura** is an actress and legit soprano from London; known for: *Stages - A story of grief*, *ick - A comedy dating story*. She brought inspired nuances, intuitive intelligence and depth to her character Ileana.



***Ileana*** (25), an aspiring writer, fights to break free from the shadow of childhood trauma that haunts her mental health and personal connections.

## Main Cast

### Leo Anand -- *Man*



**Leo Anand** started acting three years ago with the Shakespeare Society while pursuing his degree in Industrial Design. He brought his passion for experiencing stories firsthand in Sânziana, performing his role with genuine abandon. Known for: *Office Food* and *Honour & Duty*.



***Man*** (24), desperate to conceal his deep-seated insecurities and unable to accept being hurt, spirals into a dark world of control, intimidation, and stalking.

## Cast

Producer - Writer - Director

DANIELA STEMATE

Cast:

Ileana - FRANCESCA AMURA

Man - LEO ANAND

Maria, the Hypnotherapist- AGATA MARIA FRANKOWASKA

Cristian - RICHARD TRIST

Crew:

Director of Photography

PHINEAS SAJOUS

Executive Producer

DANIELA STEMATE

Editor

HARPREET SINGH

Colourist

REBECCA GOODEVE

Post-production Assistant

FABIEN DUCHAMP

Music Composer

GIACOMO D' ANSELM

Post audio services

STORIED SOUND POST AUDIO

Re-recording Mixer

STEFON BERGERON

Sound Designer  
DOUGLAS NORTH

Music mixer  
FILIPPO GRAMAGLIA

Text graphics  
DARSHAN GAJJAR

2D animation storyboarder  
EUGENIA CYNTHIAPUTRI

2D animation background designer and artist  
EUGENIA CYNTHIAPUTRI

2D animator  
EUGENIA CYNTHIAPUTRI

First Assistant Director  
JENNÉ BROOKES

Gaffer  
HYIAS CHING

Sound Recordist  
KJ SIMPSON

First Assistant Camera  
TAYLOR WU

Catering/Runner  
GEANINA BUGLEA  
CRISTINELA BUGLEA



## Media Stills & Featured videos

Featured scene link <https://bit.ly/4oR1Um6>

Featured Trailer download link <https://bit.ly/3VpRlc9>

[www.sanzianafilms.com](http://www.sanzianafilms.com)



## Media Stills



## FAQ list

- **What sparked the idea for this film?**

Rooted in Daniela's own life and shaped by extensive research into ancient myths, contemporary issues, esoteric teachings, and diverse world cultures, *Sânziana* marks the first step in bringing her distinct narrative voice to the screen, while remaining financially feasible.

- **Can you talk about a tough moment during filming and how you handled it?**

For someone filming, managing, and producing a film for the first time, nearly every aspect felt like a challenge. Perhaps the toughest, yet, surprisingly, one of the most enjoyable moments was shooting the last scene on a cold, rainy day out on a bridge. We were already working overtime, and it wasn't until after we had wrapped and packed away all the equipment that we realised we had forgotten to film a crucial scene: the protagonist's emergency call, a vital moment in the story.

- **What's one memory from production that stands out?**

After seven months of searching and several tryouts, the producer-writer-director finally found the right animation artist — Eugenia Cynthiaputri — who worked closely with Daniela to complete the entire animation for the dream sequences. The collaboration lasted an intense three months, from May to August 2024, and quite a few weeks extra after that working with the Sound Designer to finalise the sound.

- **How did you pick your cast, especially for the lead roles?**

The lead role for the character Ileana was performed by FRANCESCA AMURA with whom Daniela Stemate worked for the first time on the mini shoot on a short film course at the City Academy a few months prior. Her talent, ease of performance and professionalism impressed. The following three members of cast applied to the production through mandy.com: Man - LEO ANAND the only other actor seen IN SHOT in the film who fit the character effortlessly quite from the start his audition tape; Maria, the Hypnotherapist-



AGATA MARIA FRANKOWASKA, who first auditioned for the Ileana role, and Cristian - RICHARD TRIST gave their performances OUT OF SHOT in the phone conversation scenes.

- **What do you hope people will get from watching your film?**

By shining a light on the dream world and the psyche, the creator aims to offer viewers a deeper understanding of the profound effects of childhood trauma — particularly the often-silenced experiences of sexual assault — but also to open the door wider into the intricacies of human inner living. This work highlights how traumas shape both children and adults, and how justice is all too often elusive. Breaking this silence and stigma is a crucial step toward healing.

Through storytelling, Daniela Stemate hopes to raise awareness and to empower others to embrace self-acceptance and seek healing. This approach has the potential to foster empathy, encourage open conversations, and contribute to a more understanding and compassionate society.

- **How is this film different from your previous work?**

This project marks the first time Daniela Stemate has fully produced, written, and directed a work on her own—a significant personal and professional milestone. It gave her the freedom to incorporate fantastical elements drawn from world mythologies, folklore, and symbolism, allowing her to express her creative voice while drawing inspiration from her ethnic roots.

- **What techniques did you use to give the film its unique style?**

The narrative was told through live-action footage as well as animation to depict the parallel worlds of daily life and the happenings of the mind closely intertwined and propelling each-other in a three act story of the hero's journey with folkloric and symbolism from dark fairytales.



- **How did you manage your budget and resources for this film?**

The film's budget was managed with a careful balance between cost control and quality, particularly given the challenges of a debut project and the inherent complexities of animation. Gradually increasing demands on the budget are common in first-time productions, often due to unforeseen factors or the pursuit of higher standards in areas such as sound design, colour grading, promotional materials, and equipment.

Essential elements were prioritised without compromising significantly on quality, while maintaining flexibility when justified, fostering a thoughtful and adaptive approach to decision-making. This experience has been invaluable, providing a clearer understanding of how to allocate resources effectively and anticipate hidden costs in future film productions.

- **What projects are you working on next?**

A fantasy TV series following ancient mythical figures clashing with the unfamiliar modern world in their quest to regain power—across Earth and the realms above and below.

- **Any tips for someone just starting out in filmmaking?**

Having a strong script is essential, but equally important is planning how to tell the story in the most authentic and creative way, while keeping costs low and quality high. Striking a balance between creativity and budget, remaining resilient through inevitable challenges, and maintaining focus on the vision and the team are all crucial. Starting with at least a 30% financial contingency is also key to managing the unpredictable nature of production. Another core principle of filmmaking is to never assume that challenges make the process "hard." Issues will arise at every step, but the real skill lies in finding the best and fastest solutions.

Additionally, it's important to remain mindful of how to support and promote the careers of cast and crew, both during production and long after it ends, in order to honour everyone's contribution to the filmmaking journey.

## **Contact of the press officer**

Producer-writer-director Daniela Stemate

email: [dm.stemate@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dm.stemate@yahoo.co.uk)

web: [www.sanzianafilms.com](http://www.sanzianafilms.com)