

# The Second Game

a film by Corneliu Porumboiu



64<sup>th</sup> Internationale  
Filmfestspiele  
Berlin  
Forum





**SINOP-  
SIS  
&  
CON-  
TACT**

This film is a football match between two Bucharest teams, Steaua and Dinamo, which took place on the 3rd of December, 1988. My father was the referee. We re-watched the match together, some 25 years later.

PRODUCER & ROMANIAN  
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# INTER- VIEW

The Second Game is your first non-fiction film, and more than this, it is self-referential and very personal; a sort of atypical home movie. How did you start to get interested in this type of cinema?

An interview with Corneliu Porumboiu about *The Second Game*.

by *Gabriela Filippi and Andrei Rus*

**Corneliu Porumboiu:**

I started backwards. A year or two ago, on a show called *Replay*, aired by the Romanian Public Television, I saw again a few minutes from a football match refereed by my father [former match official Adrian Porumboiu] in 1988. After the phone threat I had received when I was a child, I learned the rules of the game to overcome my fear. I used to watch matches with my brother Octavian and my mother, and they would keep asking me, “Was it offside? Was it a foul? Was he right to give the yellow card?” I had become a referee sitting in front of the TV set. But I hadn’t understood anything watching this game because it was snowing and I could hardly see the ball. Watching it again after all these years I had a strange feeling, one that was difficult to define. Several months later I ran into Marian Olaianos, the producer of the show *Replay*, and I asked him for the recording of the game. I wanted to see it again with my father and to clarify certain things. I was also thinking that this discussion could serve as research for a potential film. I had been wanting to make movies that take on the subject of football because I grew up in this world and I played football as a teenager.

Besides the images from the TV show, which reminded me of this match, there were other images that influenced me: two scenes from The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu, the film by Andrei Ujic . The scenes take place in winter, at the end of the 80s. One of them shows an empty store, the other is a traveling with people saluting Ceausescu, taken from a sort of personal, subjective perspective. While until then I had watched the film with detachment, these scenes were a powerful emotional blow for me and this is because in the meantime I had come to associate my childhood with a winter shot on VHS.

You never thought about making a journal-film, in which you would be talking about your family and yourself?

**CP:**

I wanted to watch this film again to clarify something. It is hard for me to say what exactly. I wanted to see this match again because, in a strange way, I have come to associate this game with the threat I had received a few years before it took place. This threat stuck in my memory as did the voice of the man on the phone. It infiltrated my films: it inspired the Securitate officer who rings in to the live show in 12:08 East of Bucharest (2006), and it also influenced me in Police, Adjective (2009), in the way I constructed Anghelache, the head of the police. He uses pseudo-logic and has an absurd way of dealing with things and asking questions. But outside of these clarifications which are significant to me, I never planned to enter the journal-film domain. Besides, I didn't open any gates

to some sort of family confession. Initially I had instead wanted to take a political approach and The Second Game has this, albeit not explicitly. While before 1989 we could have talked about censorship, because the camera was positioned in such a way at matches as to rarely catch a close-up of the players, and the conflicts between them were never shown, today there is a restrictive, albeit different way of broadcasting football games. The perspective the camera has now at matches is so precise, in the US tradition of extorting emotions by showing close-ups and re-runs, that the experience of watching the film in front of the TV has almost nothing to do with experiencing it live, at the stadium. Seeing again the match, which my father refereed, I asked myself if this way of shooting with which I grew up isn't the one that indirectly shaped the way I relate to cinema. With my films I try to establish things, to ask questions, to recall certain events. Our society still has a black-and-white relationship with the past, a certain type of simplistic vision of history. I think this is one of the reasons I'm in cinema: to question this mentality.

The film's commentary is made up of several takes, or is it, from beginning to end, a recording of one conversation between you and your father?

**CP:**

I watched the film at home, in Vaslui, on a basic DVD player, which didn't have a pause button. We started to watch the match and talk about it, but, after we'd been recording for a while, the DVD froze. We then had to watch it again and we started the discussion from scratch. This time

I realized after 20 minutes that my tape recorder wasn't working. I met my father again the next day to start the recording over and again we had problems, this time after the 60th minute, so we had to start watching the film for the fourth time, from the beginning, in order to finish the viewing and the recording of the discussion. So, up until the 60th minute we had three takes of the conversation and from the 60th minute on, only one. The first recording with my father had become a sort of TV discourse, adopting a somewhat neutral attitude. His answers were detached, as he is a person used to interviews and cameras. So, in the end, it was good the conversation was interrupted several times because I think this made him drop his mechanical way of relating to the game. In the second part of the discussion, the questions are fewer and the dialogue sparser because we enter the game too. And although the recording misses certain things I would have liked it to have in, I thought the combination of the images and our conversation works as a documentation of the meeting between me and my father, that it is useless to try to artificially attach other meanings to it. Had I added inserts to explain certain information in the discussion that might be confusing to viewers unfamiliar with the trajectory of his career, or had I re-taped the parts of the discussion that were lost, I would have risked losing the freshness of the moment between us. I would have ended up with a different film, a different type of emotion, or even no emotion.

In the film, your father says that the match you were discussing was the third or fourth that had taken place between the two teams and for which he was the referee. So, how come the title of the film, *The Second Game*?

**CP:**

My father has set as his ringtone Shostakovich's *Second Waltz*. At first I thought a potential title would be *The Second Waltz*, because from a certain point onwards the game becomes absurd, a sort of macabre dance. I found *The Second Game* more appropriate though: it was the second time I had watched the film and it was turning into something else.

What does your father think of the film?

**CP:**

My father hasn't seen it yet but he knows it is not a serious film. He teases me all the time with the question: "When will you make a serious film, an important film, with emotion?"

# BIO- GRA- PHIES

# Corneliu Porumboiu Writer/Director



Corneliu Porumboiu was born in 1975, in Vaslui, Romania.

He played football as a junior at Sports School Club, Vaslui. In 1992 he gave up football because he was too lazy.

Later on, Corneliu decided to study Film Directing at the National University of Theatre and Cinematography, from which he graduated in 2003. The short films he made as a student won awards at major film festivals including Cannes and Montpellier.

Liviu's Dream, a medium-length film, was screened at the **Berlinale Forum** in 2004, along with the acclaimed Romanian director Lucian Pintilie's *Tertium Non Datur*.

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Two years later, Corneliu Porumboiu's first feature film, *12:08 East of Bucharest*, won the **Camera d'Or** for best debut and the Label Europe, the film distributors' award, at **Cannes' Quinzaine des Réalisateurs**. The pic received many other prizes at film festivals all over the world.

The feature film *Police, Adjective*, released in 2009, won the FIPRESCI and Jury prizes at Cannes, where it was screened in the *Un Certain Regard* section. The film has been further honoured with various national and international awards.

This fall Corneliu presented his third feature film, *When Evening Falls on Bucharest* or *Metabolism*, which was screened in the official competitions of the Locarno, Sarajevo, New York, Toronto and Thessaloniki film festivals.

Corneliu Porumboiu's latest film is *The Second Game*, a personal documentary.

## Adrian Porumboiu



Adrian Porumboiu was born in Buzau (Romania), in 1950.

He is a former football referee, Romanian Football Federation observer, retired football player, economist and businessman.

As a footballer, he played for Romanian junior and youth teams Metalul Buzau (1964-65), FC Arges Pitesti (1965-68), then for Laminorul Braila (1969-70), Gloria Barlad and Gloria Slatina (1970-71), Chimia Ramnicu Valcea (1971-72), and for the Viitorul Vaslui first team (1972-79).

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After finishing his playing career he became a referee in 1976. He first officiated matches in the C league, from 1980, before moving to the B league in 1982 and finally the A league, where he refereed games from 1984.

In 1986 he became an international FIFA referee.

Adrian Porumboiu retired from refereeing in 1997 and then served as a referee observer for the Romanian Championship until 2006. In 1998 he was appointed to lead the Romanian Football Federation (FRF) Discipline and Referee Assessment Commission. That year he also became a FIFA referee observer, a role he performed until 2006. In 1999 he stepped down from the commission and retained only his federal observer position.

He went into business the same year. Between 2006 and 2012, Adrian Porumboiu was a football financier for FC Vaslui.

His son is director and scriptwriter Corneliu Porumboiu.

**CREW  
LIST  
&  
CAST  
LIST**

42 KM FILM

97 min, video, 1:1,33, color, DCP,  
2013

With: Adrian Porumboiu and Corneliu  
Porumboiu

Director: Corneliu Porumboiu  
Produced by: Marcela Ursu  
Sound: Sebastian Zsemlye and Dana  
Bunescu  
Publicist: Anca Romanescu

