

PICTURE TREE INTERNATIONAL

PRESENTS

Constantin Film

NILAM
FAROOQ

CHRISTOPH MARIA
HERBST

CONTRA

A NEW FILM BY SÖNKE WORTMANN

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INTERNATIONAL



Original title: CONTRA
Genre: Comedy
Length: 103 minutes
Country of origin: Germany
Language: German
Director: Sönke Wortmann

Production: Constantin Film Produktion GmbH
Co-production: SevenPictures Film GmbH
Funded by: Film- und Medienstiftung NRW
FilmFernsehFonds Bayern (FFF)
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SHORT SYNOPSIS

One xenophobic remark too many: Professor Richard Pohl (Christoph Maria Herbst) is in danger of being fired from his position at the university after insulting a female law student, Naima Hamid (Nilam Farooq), in front of a packed lecture hall. When a video of the incident goes viral, university president Alexander Lambrecht (Ernst Stötzner) gives his longtime colleague one last opportunity to make amends: If the professor can succeed in mentoring Naima to win a nationwide debate competition, his chances of redemption in front of the disciplinary committee will be much better. Pohl and Naima are equally appalled at the idea of working together, but over time this unlikely pair enjoys its first success. That is, until Naima realizes that the multi-cultural fairy tale she's been participating in was actually set up to serve one purpose only, namely to save the university's reputation.

CAST

Naima Hamid – Nilam Farooq
Prof. Dr. Pohl – Christoph M. Herbst
Mo – Hassan Akkouch
President Lambrecht – Ernst Stötzner
Lial – Meriam Abbas
Junis – Mohamed Issa
Benjamin – Stefan Gorski
Johanna – Lieke Hoppe
Grandmother – Fatima Najj
Ali – Nassiem X. Al-Sheikh Mustafa
Abu – Cristiano Papasimos
Jamal – Akim Schödel
Anissa – Selin Dörtkades

CREW

Directed by Sönke Wortmann
Screenplay by Doron Wisotzky
Producers: Christoph Müller, Tom Spiess
Co-Producer: Stefan Gärtner
Executive Producer: Martin Moszkowicz
Production Management: Patricia Barth
Line Producer: Ute Schnelting
Image Designer: Holly Fink
Production Designer: Cordula Jedamski
Editor: Martin Wolf
Music: Martin Todsharow
Sound Mixer: Sylvain Rémy
Re-Recording Mixer : Tschangis Chahrokh
Sound Engineer: Sylvain Rémy
Casting: Anja Dührberg
Costume Designer: Annegret Stöbel
Makeup: Mirjam Himmelsberger, Iris Mütter

DIRECTOR BIO

Director and co-writer **Sönke Wortmann** has been one of the biggest names in contemporary German cinema since the early 90s. Among his works are *MAYBE, MAYBE NOT (DER BEWEGTE MANN; 1994)*, which became the most successful German film of the 1990s with more than six and half million tickets sold, the historical soccer drama *MIRACLE OF BERN (DAS WUNDER VON BERN, 2003)*, *POPE JOAN (DIE PÄPSTIN; 2009)* starring Johanna Wokalek and John Goodman and *HOW ABOUT ADOLF? (DER VORNAME; 2018)*, a remake of the French success *LE PRENOM*.

LONG SYNOPSIS

For law student Naima Hamid (Nilam Farooq), attending her first class with Professor Richard Pohl (Christoph Maria Herbst) is supposed to be a special day. The freshman with Moroccan roots has been dreaming of becoming a lawyer for years, as has her mother (Meriam Abbas), and they are both eager to help Naima's younger brothers have a better future in Germany, where they all live with the uncertainty of a precarious immigration status. Unfortunately, Naima's brother Junis (Mohamed Issa) abandons his big sister on her first day at university by refusing to take care of their youngest brother, Abu (Cristiano Papasimos), which means that Naima has to take the child to their grandmother (Fatima Naji) and arrives late to the packed lecture hall at Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main.

Professor Richard Pohl does not take kindly to the disruption of his lecture and proceeds to humiliate Naima in front of her fellow students. He even utters racist remarks about what he assumes is Naima's cultural background. That same day, a video of the incident goes viral. At this point, there's very little the president of the university, Professor Alexander Lambrecht (Erich Stötzner), can do for his controversial longtime colleague. Professor Pohl will have to face a disciplinary committee in a few weeks' time, and he will most likely be suspended from his position. That is, unless he is able to successfully groom Naima for a nationwide debating competition, a display of supposedly selfless commitment that would save his reputation and career.

Professor Pohl is appalled by the suggestion and hopes that Naima will not even qualify for the top-class competition. But she makes it to the next level, in part because she's convinced that she will be a better lawyer if

she's good at debating. However, she definitely doesn't want a professor like Pohl as a mentor. She only agrees to participate after Pohl insists that an immigrant woman in Germany will never be able to become a successful lawyer unless she breaks out of her role as a victim and refuses to learn from the best. These grueling and unfriendly mentoring sessions, coupled with her other lectures, part-time jobs and family problems, quickly push Naima to her physical and psychological limit. However, after she achieves her first success in the preliminary rounds of the competition, Naima realizes that she and her coach are on the right track.

Naima's boyfriend Mo (Hassan Akkouch), a simple and charming taxi driver, also encourages her to pursue her dream, even though he's afraid that his girlfriend's social advancement will get in the way of their budding relationship. At another preliminary round in Heidelberg, Naima impresses the jury with a great speech on the question: "Is Islam a dangerous religion?" After further victories in Leipzig, Berlin and Cologne, she makes it to the final. The mood couldn't be better, especially since Professor Pohl is slowly opening up to her and she realizes that even the worst cynic actually has a heart.

The day before the final in Frankfurt am Main, the tide suddenly turns: Naima's fellow student Benjamin (Stefan Gorski) tells her about the perfidious agreement between the university president and the professor: It turns out that Naima is only being used as a way to protect Pohl from the disciplinary committee and preserve the university's reputation. Naima is disappointed and does what she needs to do – with far-reaching consequences for everyone involved.



KEY CAST



Nilam Farooq
(Naima Hamid)

Nilam Farooq was born in Berlin in 1989 to a Pakistani father and a Polish mother. She started her acting career with parts in various long-running TV series and made her theatrical feature debut in Marc Rothemund's tragic comedy *MY BLIND DATE WITH LIFE* (2017). That was followed by Michael David Pates horror *HEILSTÄTTEN* (2018), for which she won the Jupiter Award for Best Actress. Next she starred in *RATE YOUR DATE* (2019) and the female action film *SWEETHEARTS* (2019) alongside Karoline Herfurth and Hannah Herzsprung.



Christoph Maria Herbst
(Professor Richard Pohl)

Christoph Maria Herbst was born in Wuppertal in 1966 and first completed an apprenticeship as a bank clerk before deciding to become an actor. After various theatre engagements, he made his theatrical feature debut in *DREAMSHIP SURPRISE - PERIOD 1*. In 2015, he starred in the surprise hit *HIGHWAY TO HELLAS* and David Wnendt's legendary novel adaptation *LOOK WHO'S BACK*, in which Adolf Hitler reappears in contemporary Germany. His first collaboration with director Sönke Wortmann was the comedy *HOW ABOUT ADOLF?*



Hassan Akkouch
(Mo)

Hassan Akkouch, born in 1988 in southern Lebanon, grew up in Berlin-Neukölln. His parents fled the civil war in 1990. His childhood and youth were shaped by the fear of being deported, but he was nevertheless able to gain artistic experience as a breakdancer, acrobat and rap musician. From 2006 to 2009, he was the protagonist in the multiple award-winning documentary *NEUKÖLLN UNLIMITED*. Since 2015, after various theatre engagements, Hassan Akkouch has been a permanent member of the prolific ensemble of the 'Münchener Kammer-spiele' ensemble and continues to work in film and TV, with *CONTRA* being his latest lead role in a feature film.

PICTURE TREE INTERNATIONAL

Picture Tree International (PTI) is an energetic and fast-growing world sales company with headquarters in Berlin. The core business is worldwide licensing across all platforms, with the company maintaining a presence at all the major film and television markets. Alongside licensing, PTI is also able to act as your German co-producer and local distributor via a fully integrated business model that offers producers individual sales and financing strategies in a results-driven and transparent partnership, something essential in today's ever changing audio-visual industry landscape. PTI's line-up of up to 15 films a year is designed to ensure the right mix of arthouse and crossover productions to fully maximize the revenue potential of each film. Picture Tree International was founded in December 2012 by Andreas Rothbauer and has been run jointly by his partner and Co-Managing Director Yuan Rothbauer since 2017.

CONSTANTIN FILM PRESENTS A CONSTANTIN FILM PRODUCTION IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH SEVENPICTURES „CONTRA“
NILAM FAROOQ CHRISTOPH MARIA HERBST HASSAN AKKOUCH ERNST STÖTZNER MERIAM ABBAS MOHAMED ISSA
MAKE-UP MIRJAM HIMMELBERGER IRIS MÜTHER COSTUME DESIGNER ANNEGRET STÖSSEL CASTING DIRECTOR ANJA DIHRBERG MUSIC MARTIN TODSHAROW EDITOR MARTIN WOLF DESIGNER CORDULA JEDAMSKI DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY HOLLY FINK
PRODUCTION MANAGER UTE SCHNELTING LIVE PRODUCER PATRICIA BARTH EXECUTIVE PRODUCER MARTIN MOSZKOWICZ CO-PRODUCER STEFAN GÄRTNER BASED UPON „LE BRIO“ WRITTEN BY VICTOR SAINT MACARY YAËL LANGMANN NOË DEBRÉ AND YVAN ATTAL
CONSTANTIN FILM VERLEH: GMBH IS THE EXCLUSIVE OWNER OF ALL EXPLOITATION RIGHTS
PRODUCERS CHRISTOPH MÜLLER TOM SPIESS SCREENPLAY DORON WISOTZKY DIRECTOR SÖNKE WORTMANN
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