



MORLANG

A Film by Tjebbo Penning



English language / Netherlands / 97min

Public Relations Contact

Ann Hinshaw
The Film Movement Series
375 West Broadway, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10012
212-941-7744, ext 214
212-941-7812 fax
ann@filmmovement.com

Distributor Contact

Andre Lee
The Film Movement Series
375 West Broadway, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10012
212-941-7744, ext. 212
212-941-7812, fax
andre@filmmovement.com

SYNOPSIS

Based on a true story, Morlang is a chilling, psychological drama about jealousy, betrayal and revenge.

Successful artist Julius Morlang has reached a crossroad in his career. So when his wife Ellen becomes involved with an upcoming new artist, the limits of their love are strained. Julius seeks refuge in Ann, a sexy new admirer. But when Ellen unexpectedly falls ill, the two of them must reform the trust they had lost before.

But once betrayed, can you trust the one you love?

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

An artist at the peak of his career must protect a deadly secret from his past in the chilling psychological thriller MORLANG.

MORLANG, is co-scripted and directed by Tjebbo Penning, and produced by Petra Goedings for Dutch production company Phanta Vision.

PAUL FREEMAN ('Double Team', 'A World Apart', 'Raiders of The Lost Ark', and recently 'George and the Dragon') plays the title character of the much-lauded Dutch multi-media artist Julius Morlang. DIANA KENT ('Wings of a Dove', 'Heavenly Creatures', 'Billy Elliott') stars as his betrayed wife Ellen, and SUSAN LYNCH ('From Hell', 'Waking Ned' and recently John Sayles' 'Casa de los Babys') stars as his younger girlfriend Ann, who discovers the past that Morlang has tried to hide.

Set against the wilds of Ireland and the fashionable downtown Dutch art scene, successful artist Julius Morlang finds himself caught in a marriage that no longer inspires his life or art. Forced to make the ultimate moral decision when his wife Ellen is diagnosed with a terminal illness, he seizes an opportunity to change his life forever. But Morlang soon begins to realise that someone else knows that there was more to Ellen's death than is at first apparent.

Faced with losing both his new free spirited lover Ann and his renewed inspiration for his work, Morlang has to confront his nemesis, or reveal the past to Ann, before it is too late to save his relationship, career and new life.

Moving from a highly successful career as a commercials director dividing his time between New York and Holland, **director and writer Tjebbo Penning** makes his feature film debut with MORLANG, having already completed the much praised and critically recognised short films 'The Bitch is Back' and 'The Oath'.

For his debut feature Penning found himself intrigued by a television interview: 'a couple announced during an interview that they were going to commit suicide. I then saw another interview a few months later, after the woman had killed herself, but the man was still alive. He had had no intention of killing himself. And I thought that the biggest shock for anyone would be that someone you have been married to for so many years is not who you think they are. Looking at the first interview again, she must have trusted him so much. And what if

she had found out before she died what was happening? What a huge, huge shock that would be’.

Producer Petra Goedings who has already established a highly successful relationship with Penning on his short films, thinks MORLANG has a ‘very unique and universal story’: ‘We all keep secrets’ she says. ‘Those moments when you secretly wish you could almost kill somebody close to you, someone who trusts you, these are the really interesting moments. And this is what MORLANG is about, and why I think it makes a very original and universal story.’

Penning started to work on the initial script of MORLANG with some key facts: ‘Suppose two people want to commit suicide and one of them doesn’t go through with the pact they have made. Then it turns out that the reason he doesn’t go through with it is that he has met someone else. How could someone do that, and to someone who really loves and trusts them? But the big question is why would someone do that? And that is how we began our structure for the film.’

‘In the television interview’ continues Penning, ‘I remembered that the man was very quiet; a kind of passive aggressive person, but one who always gets his way through his own passivity. Why didn’t he just leave the marriage? Why not even write a note and walk out? I think it is a fear of confrontation and a fear of being honest which is something we all have to a certain degree. For example, when you are in a relationship and it is not working, very few of us say, look, it isn’t working. Everybody has a little bit of the Morlang character inside him or her and the only way to understand the film’s story is to understand the man. I think you don’t have just anger or hatred for him. Perhaps you even understand why he did this.’

The script also allowed for a highly original combination of locations that subtly reflect the contrasting moods of the plot, being set both on the wild Atlantic shores of Ireland, and the downtown art world of the Dutch city of Rotterdam. Although Julius Morlang and his wife Ellen live as a high profile professional couple in the city, they keep a hideaway in Ireland. Serving as a place of refuge and solace to them both, and as a place of creative inspiration to Morlang in particular, it is here the couple’s suicide pact reaches its deadly conclusion. But it is also here that Morlang brings his newfound love and muse Ann.

The title character of Julius Morlang is on screen for the majority of the film, during which the film flashes between the two women in his life, as past and present are slowly uncovered to those around him. When working on the casting for the part of Morlang, director Tjebbo Penning was ‘looking for an actor who you feel sympathy with, someone you like’. He found that in the actor **PAUL FREEMAN**.

For Penning, Freeman is ‘very much at peace with himself and this quality comes through’. Producer Petra Goedings agrees with him: ‘you feel that he is very strong but also very sympathetic. That is a combination that brings the character to life and makes you believe in the huge dilemma in which he finds himself.’

For Paul Freeman, the script reminded him of the mysterious and moody French films of the early 70s. ‘The story was very strong and original. Not the kind of script you see very often at all, with a wonderful use of flashbacks to show both of Morlang’s relations with Ellen his wife, and Ann his lover’.

SUSAN LYNCH, who plays Ann, was also attracted to the ‘very real and compelling story of MORLANG’. Agreeing with Freeman on the original use of flashbacks as a device to reveal both sides of one character, she notes: ‘The audience get to see two different men in Morlang, in two different relationships. The Morlang with Ann and the Morlang with Ellen are two different people.’

Freeman enjoyed the complexities and contradictions of his character Morlang, a successful and fashionable artist. ‘He lives through his women. He has a complex and entangled mind and that is what you see in his art. He is involved in a long marriage with Ellen. But like most marriages it has its ups and downs’. But for Morlang, this begins to affect his art and creative edge, and his frustration grows.

Continues Freeman: ‘Morlang has an almost psychotic ability to cut his moral sense, because he feels he and his art are more important than anything else and he is able to prompt his wife into an affair to test her while withdrawing from her at the same time. Jealousy has a strange quality of voyeurism. There is almost an attractive drama to it. He gives her this test and she fails. And he is also too selfish to contemplate living with an invalid when she becomes terminally ill at around the same time. It is the combination of these things that shows Morlang the possibility of a new life, which he takes in a very deceitful way. He takes the wrong moral decision because of his own innate selfishness and his own sense of worth as an artist.’

Of his relationships with both Ann and Ellen, Freeman says: ‘Morlang is attracted to dominant women. You see at the beginning of the film his relationship with Ann, so therefore you see what he must have been like with Ellen his wife. But at some point in his relationships he emotionally withdraws as you see with Ann. This is I think a sort of blackmail, and this is how he dominates the women in his life. But we are careful not to give any simple answers to his actions - why he does what he does.’

Actress **DIANA KENT**, who plays Morlang’s wife Ellen, talks about her character: ‘She is an agent, Morlang’s agent. Their marriage has the complications that most real ones have. But what happens is a collision of personalities’.

When Ellen is prompted into an affair with the younger artist Jansen (**ROBERT JANSEN**), ‘she is provoking Morlang’ explains Kent. ‘She wants him to stand up and say what he feels. The fact that he won’t come out and say what he feels about her affair is what really tests their relationship’.

‘He is also in the conundrum of a mid-life crisis, and in that sense you have an artist getting slightly older,’ continues Kent, ‘not quite as sharp or inspired as he once felt, and therefore vulnerable to the younger talent which Jansen is. When Ellen becomes seriously ill, she has a fear of living a lesser life, and so decides to go through with a suicide pact, and Morlang agrees to join with her’.

SUSAN LYNCH who plays Ann, continues: ‘As the film begins you see Julius with his new girlfriend Ann and what unfolds, through the flashbacks, is a picture of who this person was before he met Ann’. ‘The tragedy of Ann is that she’s unaware of what Julius is going through. What I wanted to get with the character is a sense of the spirit of fun, and when the relationship starts to go through real problems, she can’t handle it. She is so into the passion

and fun of being with Julius that she never really asks enough questions about Ellen or Julius' past so unfortunately it all comes to a terrible end.'

Ann is a translator of Italian novels into English, and her carefree quality and non-confrontational style is what appeals to Julius. As for Ann, she is 'in awe of Julius' says Lynch. 'He is married and has a completely different life in Holland. But Ann doesn't want to know about this or the other woman who was a huge part of his life before. Their relationship is fun, like cat and mouse. But when he stops playing that game, she begins to realise something is seriously wrong.'

For Tjebbo Penning and his **director of photography HAN WENNINK**, filming the complex relationships played out over two very different landscapes was very challenging. The film was shot both in Ireland, at a private country house location outside Dublin that becomes Julius Morlang's artistic refuge, and in Rotterdam, where Julius exhibits his art and lives in a warehouse apartment with Ellen. Further locations were also utilised on the coast of western Ireland, and throughout Rotterdam.

The character of Julius is the only constancy throughout the film. For director of photography Wennink, it was therefore crucial to tell every scene from Julius' point of view. Wennink kept his camera either behind or in front of him, using a lot of steadicam shots.

Although there is no stylistic to differentiate the past and the present, Wennink, in liaison with the art department opted for 'a deliberately hard feel' for the overall mood and look of the film. 'Although the locations are very different' he continues, 'they are lit in the same way. Both the camera and art department worked on removing all primary colours, so that the overall colour palette is reduced and everything within film kept in the same range.'

CREDITS

DIRECTOR	Tjebbo Penning
PRODUCTION	Phanta Vision Film International
PRODUCER	Petra Goedings
STORY/ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY	Ruud Schuurman Tjebbo Penning
SCREENPLAY WRITTEN BY	Ruud Schuurman Tjebbo Penning Matthew Faulk Mark Skeet

MORLANG is an English-language psychological thriller about jealousy, betrayal and revenge. The script is loosely based on a true story known as the "Van Bemmelen affair".

CAST

JULIUS MORLANG	PAUL FREEMAN
ELLEN MORLANG	DIANA KENT
ANN BURROUGHS	SUSAN LYNCH
WIM GIEL	ERIC VAN DER DONK
ROBERT JANSEN	MARCEL FABER
HELEEN	SASKIA RINSMA
PETER	HUIB BROOS
ANNOYING ARTIST	EDWARD STELDER
POLICEMAN	JOE GALLAGHER
CUSTOMS OFFICERS	FRIEDA HAND
	DEREK REID
	PADDY O'CONNELL
NURSE 1	NORA MULLENS
DOCTOR	PORGY FRANSSSEN
NURSE 2	ELVIRA OUT
SPANISH GALLERY OWNER	MAXIMO MEWE

CREW

DIRECTOR	TJEBBO PENNING
STORY/ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY	RUUD SCHUURMAN
	TJEBBO PENNING
SCREENPLAY WRITTEN BY	RUUD SCHUURMAN
	TJEBBO PENNING
	MATTHEW FAULK
	MARK SKEET
PRODUCER	PETRA GOEDINGS
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER	DAVID COLLINS
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS	VYBEKE WINDELOV
	SAN FU MALTHA
CASTING	JOYCE NETTLES
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	HAN WENNINK
EDITOR	JP LUISTERBERG
PRODUCTION DESIGN	RIKKE JELIER &
	ALFRED SCHAAF
COSTUME DESIGN	NANDA KORVER
MAKE UP	JEF SIMONS
MUSIC AND SOUND DESIGN	SOUNDPALETTE

BIOGRAPHIES

TJEBBO PENNING - DIRECTOR

A graduate of Amsterdam's acclaimed Film Academy, MORLANG marks Penning's directorial debut, a project for which he also takes a co-writer credit.

After graduating in 1992, he directed episodes of several Dutch drama series for most of the major networks.

The frustration this caused resulted in a short film made in 1995; the horror-spoof THE BITCH IS BACK, his first collaboration with producer Petra Goedings. This 15 minute film became an unexpected festival hit and was shown at more than 50 film festivals internationally, at which it won two prizes.

The short film THE OATH, made in 1997, surpassed its predecessor by winning 11 prizes and two nominations. This considerably more serious 10 minute film has now also been through the festival circuit and both films have been sold to various foreign television channels (The British channel 4 among them).

Between '97 and '99 Penning directed a number of commercials until he started production for MORLANG, shooting in 2000.

MORLANG was released in Dutch cinemas in November 2001. The screenplay was nominated for the 'Gouden kalf' (the Dutch Academy Awards) and at the Cairo International Film Festival lead actor Paul Freeman won the Best Actor award. On top of that, Penning received the award for Best First Film from Abas Kiostorami, the head of the jury.

Currently Tjebbo Penning is working on his screenplay for a new feature film; THE PROMISING FUTURE OF ROGER KOLNIK.

PAUL FREEMAN - (JULIUS MORLANG)

One of the most prolific and recognised actors of his generation, Freeman's huge credit list spans film, television and theatre in a career that is truly international in its reach.

Freeman is best known to an international cinema audience for his roles in the box office hits 'Raiders of the Lost Ark', playing Belloq under the direction of Steven Spielberg; 'Double Team' directed by Tsui Hark, 'The Last Island' directed by Marleen Goris, and 'Shanghai Surprise' by Jim Godard.

As a stage actor, Freeman has worked with the very best known directors and companies. His recent credits include the leading role in hit London play 'Art'. He has recently completed roles for the world renowned Royal Shakespeare Company including Claudius in 'Hamlet'; Prospero in 'The Tempest', as well as Geraldo in multi award –winning play 'Death and The Maiden'.

Freeman starred in Peter Hall's production of 'Orpheus Descending' at London's Haymarket Theatre, and David Hare's 'Plenty', and has also appeared in such television classics as 'Inspector Morse', 'E.R.' for American television, the BBC's 'House of Cards', and Lucas Films hit series 'Young Indy'.

SUSAN LYNCH - (ANN BURROUGHS)

A graduate of London's Central School of Speech and Drama, where she was awarded the prestigious Kenneth Branagh Renaissance Award for outstanding achievement, Lynch recently came to international prominence in the title role of the critically acclaimed feature film 'Nora' by Pat Murphy. Lynch starred opposite Ewan McGregor in a production for his own company, Natural Nylon.

Lynch also appeared in the international hit 'Waking Ned', in John Sayles's film 'The Secret of Roan Inish' and more recently in the DNA Films production 'Beautiful Creatures' and 20th Century Fox's production 'From Hell' starring Johnny Depp.

For the small screen, Lynch took on a wide variety of roles in prestigious television dramas, playing Rebecca in the BBC series 'Ivanhoe', and starring in the hit series 'Cracker' for Granada. Lynch also took a title role in director John Wood's 'Dangerous Lady'.

Theatrical roles include Katerina in 'The Storm' at London's Almeida Theatre, the title role in Miss Julie at The Young Vic, the part of Marina in the National Theatre's 'Pericles' and the title role in 'Lulu' for the Cambridge Theatre Company.

DIANA KENT - (ELLEN MORLANG)

Diana Kent's feature film credits include Ian Softley's 'Wings of a Dove', and Peter Jackson's 'Heavenly Creatures' in which she co-starred as Hilda Hulme.

On the London stage scene, Kent has played for Steven Poliakoff in 'Talk of the City' for the Royal Shakespeare Company, and for Stephen Daldry in 'An Inspector Calls', at the National Theatre. She also had the title role in 'Madame De Sade' at the Almeida Theatre.

Kent has also appeared in many television productions, taking the role of Mrs Nickleby in 'Nicholas Nickleby' for Company Pictures, as well as starring in the classic series 'Heart beat', 'The Bill' and 'Poirot'.

ERIC VAN DER DONK – (WIM GIEL)

Eric van der Donk's feature film credits include successful Dutch films as 'Kruimeltje' (Dutch boxoffice hit 1999) 'De Jurk' (Golden Calf, Dutch Film Festival 1996 for Best Feature Film, FIPRESCI Award, Venice Film Festival 1996), and 'De Aanslag' (**1987 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language**).

He also appeared in outstanding TV-series such as 'Oud Geld' (Golden Calf, Dutch Film Festival 1998 for Best TV Drama), and 'Pleidooi' (Golden Calf, Dutch Film Festival 1993 for Best TV Drama). In 1996 Eric van der Donk won a Golden Calf for Best Actor in TV Drama for his performance in 'De Langste Reis'. He also played roles in various other successful TV-series as 'Bij Nader Inzien' and youth television such as 'Het Klokhuis'.

MARCEL FABER – (ROBERT JANSEN)

Marcel Faber started to work with Tjebbo Penning 1995 when he played the title role in Pennings short film ‘The Bitch is Back’. This 15 minute film became an unexpected festival hit and was shown at more than 50 film festivals internationally, at which it won two prizes.

He also appeared in ‘Dagboek van een Zwakke Yogi’ a feature by Pim de la Parra, and various Dutch TV series such as ‘Spangen’, ‘Fort Alpha’, ‘Vrouwenvleugel’ and ‘Baantjer’. Currently he is playing a role in the popular Dutch soap series GTST.

PHANTA VISION FILM INTERNATIONAL & PETRA GOEDINGS

Petra Goedings got off to an early start in the film world. Raised among the stacks of reels and plush chairs of her family’s downtown Amsterdam cinema, The Movies, it was there that she developed her interest in art-house films. She went on to study at the Film and Television academy, graduating in 1995.

Before her graduation, she had already formed her own ideas on how her career would unfold. She and her business partner JP Luijsterburg established Phanta Vision, a film production and facilities company, in 1990. Through this company Goedings developed and produced 11 shorts between 1992 and 1996. Among these were two shorts by Tjebbo Penning; *The Bitch is Back* and *The Oath*, that were both received with international acclaim.

By 1997 Goedings started to develop her first feature films. The Dutch-Bulgarian co-production *Letter to America*, developed through the Circle producers programme, was the Bulgarian entry for the Oscars in 2001. *Vergeef Me*, a shocking semi-documentary, rocked the sensibilities of viewers at its premiere in 2001 while *Morlang*, a drama by Tjebbo Penning, has chilled the spines of audiences in Asia, Europe, and America, was nominated for a golden calf for best scenario at the Dutch Film Festival and is still in distribution at this time.

Petra continued her education while producing these films, graduating cum laude from the company management and development course at the Maurits Binger Film Institute, and participating in the Nipkow programme, the Film Business School, and the Strategics film marketing course.

Her fourth film, *Zwarte Zwanen*, co-produced with M&B films, is set to premiere at the Dutch film festival this fall.

Petra has continued to produce shorts, both experimental, such as *In Whitest Solitude*, a dance film based on a poem by R.M. Rilke, and commercial, such as *The Elephant and the Snail*, a short children’s animation.

Goedings recent foray into TV production, *Frø-live*, was broadcasted by the NPS in 2002. After that success, she is now developing a series of documentaries and the comic drama-series *Agnes*, for Dutch television. She also investigating the possibility of turning *The Elephant and the snail* into a children’s series.

Of course, her feature film production has not stood still. She is now developing five features, intending to produce them within the next three years.

Festival History and Awards

AWARDS AND NOMINATIONS

Cairo International Film Festival, Egypt 2001: Best First work of Director & Best Actor
Dutch Film Festival, The Netherlands 2001:- Nomination for Golden Calf, Best Scenario
International Filmmusik Biennale Bonn 2002: - Nomination for Best Music Score
Special Jury Prize, Houston Worldfest, Dutch Panorama, USA 2003

FESTIVALS

Dutch Film Festival, in competition, The Netherlands 2001
Flanders International Filmfestival, World Cinema Section, Belgium 2001
Cairo International Film Festival, in competition, Egypt 2001
International Film Festival Rotterdam, Dutch perspective section, The Netherlands 2002
Tribeca Film Festival, in competition, USA 2002
First Look Series, Tribeca Film Center, USA 2002
International Filmmusik Biennale Bonn, in competition, Germany 2002?
Bangkok Film Festival, in competition, Thailand 2002
Hamptons International Film Festival, World Cinema Section USA 2002

ABOUT FILM MOVEMENT

Film Movement is an innovative new film distribution company, created as a solution for millions of consumers across the nation whose access to outstanding film is limited by geography, lifestyle or lack of information. Film Movement has members in over 50 states and 1200 cities. Film Movement acquires award winning independent films from the world's top festivals, which they then release each month of the year to members on DVD through a subscription service, and theatrically through The Film Movement Series. Participating filmmakers are able to reach under-served film fans everywhere through Film Movement.

The Film Movement Series is a new theatrical film series featuring some of the best in original world cinema. Created by the team that invented the groundbreaking Shooting Gallery Film Series, Film Movement will release 6 of its 12 films per year in leading independent cinemas in major US cities to help outstanding filmmakers find the audience they deserve. All films are available to members exclusively on DVD upon theatrical release so that they may participate regardless of where they live.

Film Movement has partnered with some of the leading independent theaters in the country to exhibit the Film Movement Series. The schedule includes the following films:

- Eric Eason's *Manito*
- Scott Hamilton Kennedy's *OT: our town*
- Donovan Leitch & Rebecca Chaiklin's *The Party's Over*
- Tjebbo Penning's *Morlang*
- Mina Shum's *Long Life, Happiness and Prosperity*
- Rolf de Heer's *Alexandra's Project*
- Vicente Amorim's *The Middle of the World*
- Tony McNamara's *The Rage in Placid Lake*
- Jacques Doillon's *Raja*