

Sihja, the Rebel Fairy

Intentions / statements

Director's statement

Marja Pyykkö

For some time I have been looking for a script for a children's film that would entice me. I was lucky when I found Sihja. The fact that it is not based on a book was really important to me as a Director. This way I feel that I can contribute most, while creating the world and its characters and the themes and tones of the film, starting from scratch.

I am fascinated about both Alfred's and Sihja's characters, and their unlikely friendship. The story of this odd friendship between a human boy and fairy girl grows uniquely into themes of courage, diversity of life, and acceptance. We live in a time when it's highly important to show kids a variety of role models. Alfred's gentle and kind character, his curiosity towards life and his permissive attitude towards all new is disarming. And Sihja is unlike any other fairy you have ever seen before. I love her stubbornness, her clever wit, I love that she is sassy and doesn't know when it's time to just shut up. Sihja is powerful but vulnerable, physically able but clumsy, confident but just wants to be loved; all characteristics that are easy to identify with. They are also great in creating humor, conflict, tension and drama.

I feel that Sihja is a wonderful challenge for me. Even though it will be my fourth feature as a Director it will be my first film with children in the main roles and also my first with fantasy elements. This is something that I love, learning new and aiming high.

I strive to make Sihja a feature film that combines genres in a new and exciting way. The film should be light as a feather, funny and full of sharp changes in rhythm, like the best pop tune of the moment. The film should grasp the viewer, and be real and refreshing as a jump in a great puddle of mud. Finally, it should be a big-time adventure, full of true emotions.

Writers' statement

Kirsikka Saari & Jenni Toivoniemi

Sihja, the Rebel Fairy is a film about friendship between sensitive cityboy Alfred, 11, and heartfelt but chaotic fairy Sihja.

It is a humorous film about an adventure, that connects realism and fantasy together, like the stories we loved as children.

30.11.2020

Sihja, who grew up in the forest, thinks the city is fabulously organized. She yearns for more clarity for herself too: often Sihja's fairy power manifests and explodes willy-nilly, when she loses her temper. Sihja hopes to learn serenity from Alfred. Nature loving Alfred has assumed sidekick's role and is afraid to be himself within the group.

The children gain a friend from one another that they have not had before. A friend you can laugh with and dare to do things, which you would not attempt alone: a friend in whose company you can be yourself. Together they find themselves amidst an adventure as they discover that something has disturbed birds and nature.

From the beginning we thought that you can write a multilayered script for children. The film offers liberating laughter, but also ponders how to process difficult emotions and traits, such as rage, shame or apologizing and forgiveness. We wanted to give space for diversity: There is no right way to be a girl or a boy, and difference is not as scary as it may at first feel like. We wish Sihja, the Rebel Fairy is a film, which characters feel like your friends and which children will remember even once they are adults.

Sihja, the Rebel Fairy

Bios

Director's bio

Marja Pyykkö

MARJA PYYKKÖ (born 1975) graduated as a film director from the Finnish film school. She is an experienced director of popular TV series and films including the award-winning series *Hooked* and *Black Widows* that have also been distributed internationally. She has received the Finnish TV award Venla for both series. Her latest work includes international co-production series *Paradise* (2020). Her third feature, the comedy *Man and a Baby* was released in October 2017 and was number 4 among the most watched domestic films of the year. It received the Best Nordic Feature Award at the New York Nordic Film Festival in 2017. Her first feature film *Run Sister, Run!* (2010) received several national film award nominations in 2010. In addition, she has directed numerous commercials and short films.

Marja Pyykkö IMDB: https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0701603/?ref=fn_al_nm_1

Producers' bios

Elli Toivoniemi

ELLI TOIVONIEMI is an award-winning producer-director based in Helsinki, Finland. She is one of the founders and owners of Tuffi Films, a production company with a variety of highly esteemed films. Her work includes many internationally acclaimed films like the Academy Award nominated short fiction *Do I Have to Take Care of Everything?* (2012), the winner of Sundance Short Film Jury Award *The Date* (2013), *Stupid Young Heart* (2018) awarded with the Crystal Bear and the Gold Hugo winner *The Good Son* (2011). Toivoniemi is an EAVE & ACE producer graduate, recently assigned as Film Producer of the Year 2020 by Audiovisual Producers in Finland.

Toivoniemi is behind the phenomenal *Force of Habit* anthology series (2019) including a feature, 11 short films and an impact campaign, exploring gender discrimination and existing power structures in public and private life. The anthology series merited Tuffi Films the Finnish State Prize for Cinema. The thought-provoking feature *Force of Habit* has amazed both audiences and jury's around the world, receiving multiple awards and most recently it was honored with the Nordisk Film Culture Prize 2020 and Best International Feature at Raindance

26.11.2020

Film Festival, 2020. Both *Force of Habit* and *Games People Play* (2020), which Toivoniemi produced with Venla Hellstedt, had their international premiere in Göteborg IFF, where the latter also competed in the prestigious category of Best Nordic Film. *Games People Play* was awarded the Baltic Film Prize for a Nordic Feature at Nordische Filmtage Lubeck, 2020.

Elli Toivoniemi IMDB: <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm3008696/>

Venla Hellstedt

VENLA HELLSTEDT studied literature and film in London and gained an MSc in Social Anthropology from the London School of Economics and Political Science. In the UK, she worked in a number of documentary, drama and news productions for BBC, ITV and the Discovery Channel. Venla returned to work in her native Helsinki in 2009, after nearly 14 years in the UK, and has since worked as a producer of many award-winning Finnish films and international co-productions. Two of the films she produced have received the national film award for the best documentary. In 2012, the documentary film *Dance of Outlaws* was awarded at Locarno IFF. In 2018, her first feature film production as a producer, *Stupid Young Heart* premiered in Toronto IFF and won the Crystal Bear in 2019 Berlinale Generation 14+ competition. She has taken part in several international film professionals' courses, such as EAVE Producers' Workshop and Crossing Borders.

Venla Hellstedt IMDB: https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1756854/?ref=fn_al_nm_1

Writers' bios

Kirsikka Saari

KIRSIKKA SAARI is a screenwriter and director based in Helsinki. She was Oscar nominated as a screenwriter of the short film *Do I Have to Take Care of Everything?* in 2014. She has written the script for the feature film *Stupid Young Heart* (2018, dir. by Selma Vilhunen), which won the Crystal Bear at the Berlinale 2019 and Jussi Prize for the Best Screenplay. She has also published an acclaimed novel *Stupid Young Heart*. Her filmography includes a collection film *Force of Habit*, which premiered at the Gothenburg Film Festival 2020. The film was awarded at the Raindance Film Festival (Best International Feature and Best Screenplay), and won Nordisk Film Prize for an extraordinary effort within Finnish film. As a screenwriter-director her works also include awarded short films *After the Reunion* (2017) and *Super Comfort* (2018). Her most recent work as a screenwriter-director is the popular comedy series *Carpe Fucking Diem!* (2020).

Kirsikka Saari IMDB: https://www.imdb.com/name/nm2798718/?ref=fn_al_nm_1

Jenni Toivoniemi

26.11.2020

JENNI TOIVONIEMI is a writer-director whose debut feature as a director, *Games People Play* (2020), had its world premiere in the competition of Gothenburg Film Festival in 2020. *Games People Play* was awarded the best Nordic feature film and best feature film debut at Nordische Filmtage Lubeck, 2020. Toivoniemi was also one of the directors of the anthology series and the collection film *Force of Habit* (2019) from which she was awarded with the best screenplay at Raindance Film Festival, 2020 and Nordisk film prize for an extraordinary effort within Finnish film. She has directed several award-winning short films, of which *The Date* (2012), won several awards including the International Short Fiction Jury Award at the Sundance Film Festival and a Special Mention at the Berlinale Generation 14+ in 2013. *The Committee* (2016), written and directed together with Norwegian Gunhild Enger, premiered in Locarno 2016. Toivoniemi has also written theatre plays, an audio play and a feature film *Korso* (2014) together with Kirsikka Saari. Their latest collaboration is comedy series *Carpe F*king Diem!* (2020).

Jenni Toivoniemi IMDB: https://www.imdb.com/name/nm4214454/?ref=fn_al_nm_1

30.11.2020

Sihja, the Rebel Fairy

Fact sheet

English title	Sihja, the Rebel Fairy
Original title	Sihja - kapinaa ilmassa
Countries	Finland, Netherlands, Norway
Language of dialogue	Finnish
Genre	Children
Director	Marja Pyykkö
Producers	Venla Hellstedt, Elli Toivoniemi, co-producers Annemiek van der Hell, Kristine M.I. Knudsen, Janne Hjeltnes, Dennis Kleyn
Writers	Kirsikka Saari, Jenni Toivoniemi
Production companies	Tuffi Films, Windmill Film, Den Siste Skilling, Storyline Studios, Planet X Studios
Production company's website	www.tuffifilms.com
Scheduled release	01/2021
Production budget	2 850 000€
Status of production	Completed

With the support of

Finnish Film Foundation, Eurimages, Yle, The Norwegian Film Institute, Nordisk Film & TV Fond, SF Studios, The Netherlands Film Fund, The Netherlands Film Production Incentive, Business Tampere, Film Tampere, City of Tampere, Creative Europe Programme - Media of the European Union, Mer Film, Dutch Features, Church Media Foundation, Avek

Main cast	Sihja - Elina Patrakka Alfred - Justus Hentula Riia - Elena Lееve Eerik - Elmer Bäck Perttu - Eero Ritala Lisbeth - Pirjo Lonka Emma - Paola Bärlund
-----------	--

Logline

A story of an unconventional fairy and an eccentric boy who overcome their own fears and obstacles in order to save nature.

30.11.2020

Short synopsis

Sihja is a young, charming and a little outrageous fairy, who leaves her forest home. In the city, she meets a sensitive new friend Alfred (11). Sihja loves the newly found organized urban shapes and orderly habits that humans have. They bond quickly and have a lot of fun, until one day dead birds appear on the city streets. The smelly fertilizer factory could be the culprit, but when Sihja reveals her uncontrolled fairy powers, people begin to be weary of her. Alfred and Sihja must find out what is threatening nature. With clever and brave investigation, they manage to prevent an environmental disaster. Thanks to Alfred, Sihja learns to use her super power and to apologise, while Alfred finds confidence to stand up for himself.

Sihja, the Rebel Fairy

Main cast bios

Eero Ritala's previous films include *Force of Habit* (2019), *One Last Deal* (2018), *Wonderland* (2017), *Distractions* (2015) and *Headfirst* (2014). For his role in the feature film *Fanatics* (2012) Ritala received a Jussi Award for Best Actor and in 2018, Ritala was honored with a Golden Venla Award. Ritala has also performed in multiple theaters and on numerous television series such as *Kolmistaan* (2017-2019), *Onnela* (2017-2020) and *Putous* (2010).

Elina Patrakka plays the title role in *Sihja, the Rebel Fairy* (2021). Regardless of her young age, the sparkling roman candle of talent has already been seen in films *Ragged Life of Juice Leskinen* (2019) and *Ankeinen's Christmas Greeting* (2018), in the short film *The Stick* (2019) and in various television series including *Nordic Law* (2020), *Peacemaker* (2020), *Shadow Lines* (2019-2021), *Bordertown* (2019), *Bullets* (2018), and *Pajama Party* (2018, 2017).

Justus Hentula makes his film debut in *Sihja, the Rebel Fairy* (2021) in a leading role as Alfred. Previously Hentula has appeared in the Golden Venla Awarded television series *Roba* (2016) and he is also known for his work as a voice actor. In his free time, the exceptionally skilled youngster enjoys parkour, movies, reading, writing and baking.

Pirjo Lonka has starred in numerous films, television series and theaters. Most recently her work has been seen in the Finnish National Theater and she is also a member of the ensemble in the highly esteemed Q-Teatteri. Lonka has been awarded a Golden Venla Award for Best Actress for the television series *Ylikävely* (2008) and she has two Jussi Award -nominations, from the films *One Last Deal* (2018) and *Distractions* (2015).

Elmer Bäck is a familiar sight in films, television series and various theater stages, both at home and abroad. Bäck made his breakthrough starring in Peter Greenaway's film *Eisenstein in Guanajuato* (2015) and he is also a founding member of the internationally acclaimed Berlin-based theatre collective Nya Rampen. The actor's most recent works include *The Last Ones* (2020), currently competing for an Academy Award for Best International Feature Film and the intriguing television series *Idiomatic* (2018-2019) and *Next Of Kin* (2021).

Elena Leeve is known both for her multiple roles in films and television series and for her meritorious work on our most prestigious theater stages from The Finnish National Theater to Q-Teatteri and KOM-teatteri. Leeve has been awarded the Jussi Award for Best Actress twice, for the films *Falling Angels* (2008) and *Fire-Eater* (1998). Leeve's latest works include the film *Laughing Matters* (2020) and the television series *Onnela* (2017-2020), *Sunday Lunch* (2018-2020) and *Kakarot* (2020).

Sihja, the Rebel Fairy

Synopses

One liner

A story of an unconventional fairy and an eccentric boy who overcome their own fears and obstacles in order to save nature.

Short synopsis

Sihja is a young, charming and a little outrageous fairy, who leaves her forest home. In the city, she meets a sensitive new friend Alfred (11). Sihja loves the newly found organized urban shapes and orderly habits that humans have. They bond quickly and have a lot of fun, until one day dead birds appear on the city streets. The smelly fertilizer factory could be the culprit, but when Sihja reveals her uncontrolled fairy powers, people begin to be weary of her. Alfred and Sihja must find out what is threatening nature. With clever and brave investigation, they manage to prevent an environmental disaster. Thanks to Alfred, Sihja learns to use her super power and to apologise, while Alfred finds confidence to stand up for himself.

Tuffi Films bio

Films that dare to make that crazy jump

Tuffi Films is a production and distribution company established in Helsinki, Finland in 2010. The company is owned and run by Elli Toivoniemi, Venla Hellstedt, Kirsikka Saari, Jenni Toivoniemi and Selma Vilhunen.

Tuffi develops projects with a wide range of genres from contemporary drama to comedy, as well as versatile creative documentaries. Tuffi's films have enjoyed international success at the Academy Awards, and at festivals such as Sundance, Berlinale, Locarno, Hot Docs, Visions du Reel and Clermont-Ferrand. Tuffi Films produces quality films and series on contemporary topics with a human touch, made to stand the test of time.

Feature film *Games People Play* (dir. Jenni Toivoniemi) and anthology series *Force of Habit* (dir. Kirsikka Saari, Elli Toivoniemi, Jenni Toivoniemi and others) had their international premiere in Göteborg Film Festival, where *Games People Play* competed for the title of the Best Nordic Film. *Force of Habit*, the all-female production exploring how women are discriminated against because of their gender in public and private life, covers 11 episodes and a single feature film by fifteen writers and directors invited together by Tuffi Films. At the 2020 Jussi-gala *Force of Habit* and its makers were awarded the Nordisk Film prize for advancing and elevating the status of Finnish film culture.

2021 will see the premieres of Tuffi's first family feature film *Sihja, the Rebel Fairy* (orig. *Sihja -kapinaa ilmassa*), documentary feature film *Here Be Monsters* and the second season of the hugely popular comedy series *Carpe Fucking Diem!* (orig. *Paras vuosi ikinä*).