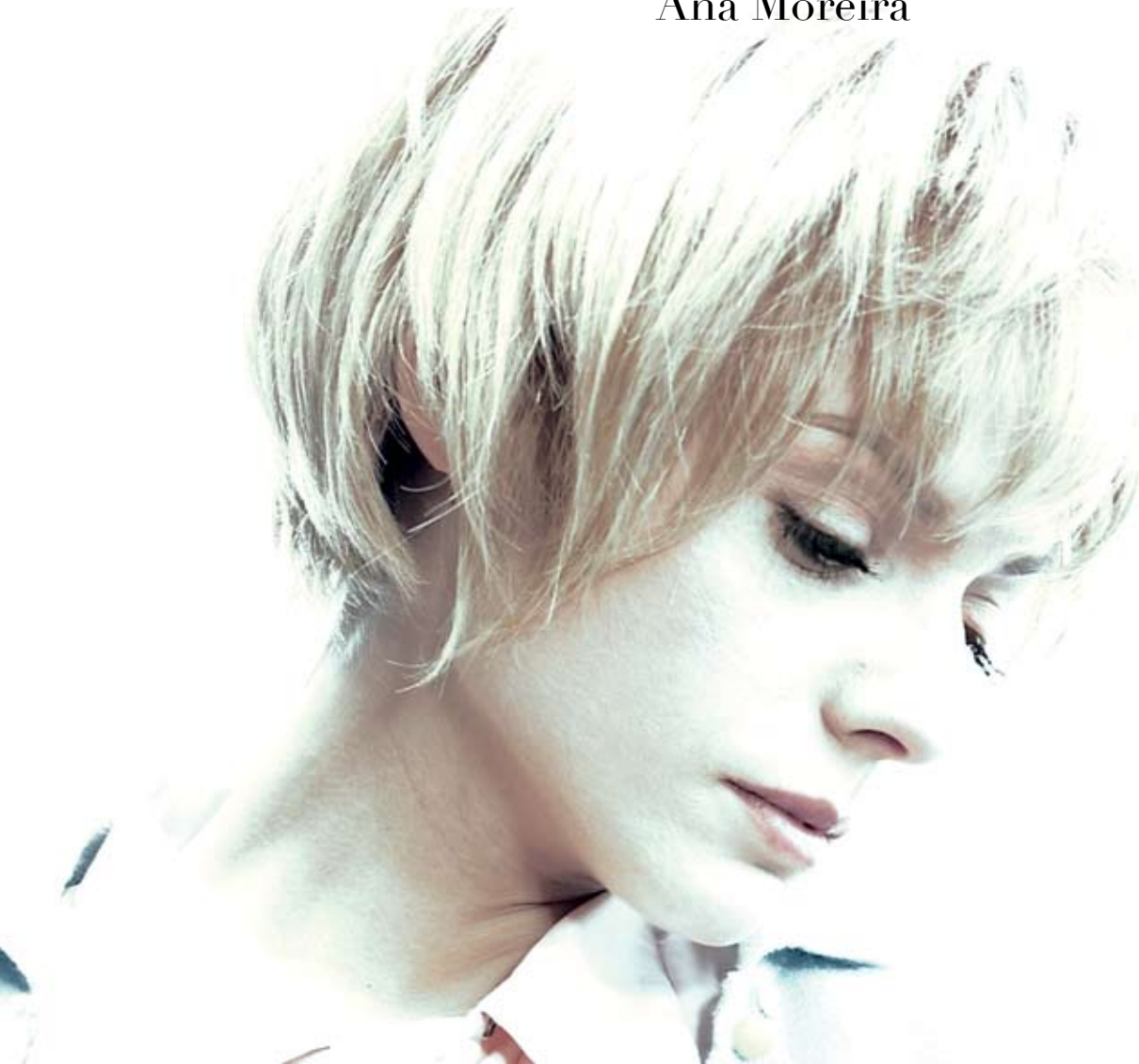


ANTÓNIO DA CUNHA TELLES and PANDORA DA CUNHA TELLES present

# the northern land

Ana Moreira



from the novel by AGUSTINA BESSA-LUÍS a film by JOÃO BOTELHO

# THE NORTHERN LAND

*She was a queen and I served her, not out of love, but because she wanted me to. May God save us from the desires of Woman! (...)*

This is the story of an extraordinary woman, Emília de Sousa, alias Rosalina de Sousa, alias the Baroness Madalena do Mar, alias the “Smelly Grape”, alias “the little goat”, and, finally, once again, the great Emília de Sousa, the greatest actress on the Portuguese stage at the end of the XIX century. She was a prostitute at the age of 15 in the brothel run by Dona Antónia, in Lisbon, beautiful like no other woman and possessed a “fantastic gaze”; she was transformed into a highly talented actress, despite being illiterate, by her protector, the perverse old Viscount Almeida Garrett, who, it is believed, wrote *The Marquis’ Niece* for her. She was a heartbreaker, and after a few years as a prostitute and in the theatre, she abandoned a promising career to marry one of the richest heirs on the Atlantic Island of Madeira, who had become wild with passion for her. Rosalina de Sousa, now transformed into a baroness, and with a chameleon-like nature, managed to be mistaken for the icon of the greatest beauty of the Europe of the XIX century, Empress Elisabeth of Austria, the beautiful Sissi, with whom she shared the attentions and the spaces of the upper classes of Madeira. When after some months “recovering from her maladies”, Sissi left Madeira in the spring of 1861, Rosalina “lost her mind”, abandoned her husband and young children, isolated herself in the family estate in the Corte do Norte, and decided to construct a mystery that would last for four generations and over a century. This is also the story of an exceptional family, one which the Emília/Rosalina mystery disturbs and draws out its behaviour, sadnesses and greatnesses of all its members throughout several lifetimes. *What does it matter if some gentleman sleeps with a woman?* she would ask. *But when someone throws themselves into the sea, that raises several different possibilities. Might this be love, or just the ashamed gesture of the sublime?*



With RICARDO AIBÉO, ROGÉRIO SAMORA, LAURA SOVERAL, JOÃO RICARDO, CUSTÓDIA GALEGO, MARGARIDA VILA-NOVA, LÍGIA ROQUE, MAYA BOOTH, GRACIANO DIAS, MARIA JOÃO PINHO, DIANA COSTA E SILVA, MARCELLO URGEGHE, MIGUEL MONTEIRO, RUI MORRISON, SOFIA MARQUES, FILIPE VARGAS, ANTÓNIO PEDRO CERDEIRA, VICENTE JORGE SILVA special appearance RITA BLANCO, VIRGÍLIO CASTELO, FERNANDA BORSATTI narrated by MARIA JOÃO CRUZ director of photography JOÃO RIBEIRO sound engineer FRANCISCO VELOSO stylist SILVIA GRABOWSKI characterization SANDO DE PERPESAC production designer CATARINA AMARO assistant director JOÃO FONSECA editor JOÃO BRAZ sound editor MIGUEL MARTINS production manager ALEXANDRE OLIVEIRA direction JOÃO BOTELHO production company FILMES FUNDO with financial support from ICA and RTP



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*not out of love, but because she wanted*





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*sublime? from the novel by Agustina Bessa-Luis*



ANA MOREIRA (Born 1980). The roles that the delicate Ana Moreira played in her first movies were frail characters, almost always defenceless victims, like those young girls one feels like wrapping up in a blanket and taking home to give them a glass of warm milk and keep them away from harm. And I gave her masks, disguises, wigs, extravagant dresses, sudden disappearances, nicknames, wiles and strategies that might free woman from the social rules and conventions demanded by the novel and the film! And she was magnificent, through a great deal of work and talent. Thank you, wonderful Ana. All the other excellent actors are from my “family”, with some recent and welcome new arrivals. I thank you all for this difficult adventure.



AGUSTINA BESSA-LUÍS (Born 1922). “I will not grant rest to those who listen to me, I will not let them stop on a feast day, because I place a firm stone even in water, and I project on the nursing child, and I drip oil on the sticking door and sense in the madman who feigns ignorance and says: *This is nothing to do with me.*” This is the greatest and most brilliant living writer, who, since 1948 (*O Mundo Fechado – Closed World*) and 2007 (*A Ronda da Noite – Night Watch*) has written over fifty novels, among which are *A Sibila – The Sibyl* from 1954, which was awarded many prizes and granted her international recognition. In 1987 she wrote *A Corte do Norte – The Northern Court*, that extraordinary puzzle, with the cliffs and the peaks of the island of Madeira as a setting, a metaphor for freedom and power. “After Fernando Pessoa, Agustina is the second miracle of Portuguese XX century literature.”

JOÃO BOTELHO (Born 1949). When my second film *Um Adeus Português – A Portuguese Farewell*, 1985, was shown at the MOMA, *New Films, New Directors*, I was surprised. When my third film *Tempos Difíceis – Hard Times*, 1987, was chosen for the NYFF at the Lincoln Center, I was pleased. Now, twenty years later, I am thrilled to be able to present the world premiere at the NYFF of my latest film *A Corte do Norte – The Northern Land*. In the meantime I have had some films at Cannes during the Directors' Fortnight – *Conversa Acabada*, 1981; *Três Palmeiras*, 1994; *A Mulher que Acreditava ser Presidente dos EUA*, 1999, and particularly in competition in Venice *Tempos Difíceis – Hard Times*, after Dickens, 1987; *Aqui na Terra – Here on Earth*, 1991; *Tráfico – Traffic*, 1997; *Quem és tu? – Who Are You?*, 2001; *O Fatalista – The Fatalist*, after Diderot, 2005. These are my main films. At the moment I am preparing *O Filme do Desassossego – The Film of Disquiet* after *The Book of Disquiet*, by Bernardo Soares, an alter ego of the poet Fernando Pessoa, which I expect to direct in 2009.



ANTÓNIO DA CUNHA TELLES (born 1935)  
PANDORA DA CUNHA TELLES (born 1978)  
This extraordinary father and daughter pairing have a great deal to do with contemporary Portuguese cinema. In the sixties António was responsible for the radical renewal of cinema in Portugal, inventing the New Portuguese Cinema in the style of the French *Nouvelle Vague* or the Brazilian New Cinema. Among other works, he has produced fundamental films such as *Os Verdes Anos*, *Belarmino* and *O Cerco*, which he also directed. Throughout his lifetime he has produced hundreds of films, among which are *O Bobo*, which won at Locarno, and *La Belle Époque*, which won the Oscar for Best Foreign Movie. Over recent years his daughter Pandora has joined the renewal of the XXI century Portuguese Cinema. She was responsible, before *A Corte do Norte*, for films such as *Kiss Me*, *O Mistério da Estrada de Sintra*, *Terra Sonâmbula* and *How to Draw a Perfect Circle*. Executive producer Alexandre Oliveira, who was responsible for some of my documentaries, far surpassed himself in this film.





# the northern land

a film by  
João Botelho  
produced by  
Filmes Fundo

## world sales

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## A CORTE DO NORTE

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