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Dancing in the Glebe

Film wraps up eight weeks of shooting in Ottawa

Tony Lofaro, The Ottawa Citizen

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Ottawa serves as a film locale for a movie co-production with Hungary and Slovenia that also has ties to Hollywood.

The Maiden Danced to Death, a drama about two brothers who are dancers in post-Communist Hungary, wrapped up filming Sunday after an eight-week shoot. The movie was shot by Oscar-winning Hollywood cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond (Close Encounters of the Third Kind, The Deer Hunter, Deliverance). Scenes were also shot in Ljubljana, Slovenia, Budapest and Montreal.

The feature film, budgeted at about \$5 million, stars Canadian actors Deborah Kara Unger (Crash), Gil Bellows (Ally McBeal) and Stephen McHattie (300). It's expected to be released theatrically in Europe and North America sometime next year.



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Deborah Kara Unger co-stars as a trophy wife in 'The Maiden Danced to Death,' a drama about two brothers -- one a businessman, the other a dancer. Scenes from the movie were shot in the Glebe on Friday.

Wayne Cuddington, The Ottawa Citizen

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The Maiden Danced to Death, 10 years in the making, is the pet project of Hungarian actor-director Endre Hules, who wrote the screenplay and stars in it. He met Ottawa film producer Michael Dobbin more than two years ago at the Berlin Film Festival and the pair worked with another producer from Slovenia to raise the money and bring the project to fruition.

"I sent Michael the script and he called me back at 3 o'clock in the morning telling me that he wanted to do it. And the rest is history, basically," said Hules, who plays one of the brothers in the film.

Dobbin, who runs Ottawa-based film company Quiet Revolution Pictures, said he was struck by the story of two brothers, one a successful businessman in the U.S., the other who remained in Hungary and dedicated himself to dance. The brothers reunite after 20 years apart and tension arises.

"I read a lot of scripts and I never read anything like this before," said Dobbin. "It's not a dance film, it's a drama, but almost within the film there are perfect examples of life imitating art. There is tension between the brothers and it all comes out at the end."

Hules said: "One of the strong points of the script was that it's not dialogue-heavy. It's very visual, it's what you see and how you present the environment and the dance dimensions."

The producers say getting Vilmos Zsigmond involved in the three-country co-production was a coup.

Hules said he's known Zsigmond for several years, and worked with him on another film.

"Vilmos is a very terse person. But he liked the fact that the script was not all dialogue and that it was very visual," said Hules.

Zsigmond's latest film, Woody Allen's *You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger*, screened at the Cannes Film Festival earlier this month. But in addition to working on big-budget Hollywood films, Zsigmond likes to work on smaller independent productions, said Hules.

Canadian actress Deborah Kara Unger said she wanted to do the film in order to work with the Hollywood legend Zsigmond, who is 80.

"I have a star crush on Vilmos," said Unger, who was also in *The Hurricane* with Denzel Washington and *The Game* with Michael Douglas.

"I just look at him and it's love at every image. And he's still working at his age, God bless him. Vilmos and Clint Eastwood, don't even get me in the same room with them, I'll melt."

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