

# SYNCOPE

a Short Film by Linus von Stumberg  
Thriller, 21 Min



## LOGLINE

Whim and the ensemble have to dance for their lives in the piece SYNCOPE.

## SYNOPSIS

After Whim makes it through the unconventional audition for the dance piece SYNCOPE, the choreographer finds herself unsatisfied with her full commitment. But what she and the other dancers experience in the rehearsals is just a glimpse of what his dark vision of will demand of them. They have to dance for their lives.



## AWARDS

Audience Award – Max Ophüls Preis 2024  
Jury Award – Busan International Short Film Festival 2024 \*\*  
Best Student Film – In The Palace 2024 \*\*  
Best Thriller – Aesthetica Short Film Festival, 2024 \*  
Best Short Film – British Urban Film Festival 2024 \*  
Audience Award – Pittsburgh Shorts Film Festival 2024  
Best Genre Film – Sehnsüchte 2024  
Special Mention – Brussels Short Film Festival 2024  
Jury Award – Muestra de Cine de Palencia 2024  
Best Screenplay – Sapporo 2023  
Audience Award – Sapporo 2023  
Special Jury Price – Sapporo 2023  
Best Male Student Director – Cannes IndieShort Awards 2024  
Best Student Film – Cannes Indie Short Awards, 2024  
Best Editing – Beijing ISFVF 2024  
Best Sound – Beijing ISFVF 2024  
Best Short Film – Beijing ISFVF 2024  
Outstanding Award – Beijing ISFVF1 2024  
Audience Award – Filmtage Friedrichshafen 2025  
Special Mention - Cinedans Amsterdam 2025

(\* BAFTA Qualifying)  
(\*\*OSCAR Academy Award Qualifying)

## MORE FESTIVAL SCREENINGS

Tampere Film Festival 2025 \*\*  
HollyShorts, LA 2024 \*\*  
Cleveland International Film Festival 2024 \*\*  
Indy Short International Film Festival, USA 2024 \*\*  
Aesthetica Short Film Festival 2024 \*  
Cambridge Film Festival 2024 \*  
Landshuter Kurzfilmfestival 2024  
Hafenkino 2024  
Kalakari 2025  
FineLine International Film Festival, Belgrade 2024  
Energá Camerimage 2023

## CONTENTS

Press Comments -----	4
Writer-Directors Note -----	6
Interview with Linus -----	7
Linus von Stumberg Biography -----	9
Fact Sheet & Contact -----	10
Festival Pictures -----	11
Movie Poster -----	15
Movie Pictures -----	16

# PRESS COMMENTS

In Linus von Stumberg's *SYNCOPE*, a Shock-Collar Dance Against Death.

The film takes on an added resonance when you realize — as I only did after watching it — that von Stumberg is not only the film's writer, director and choreographer, but also the actor who plays the simultaneously magnetic and repellent choreographer. And the film takes on another meta layer when you think about him directing a real-life cast who are playing a cast of dancers under direction.

But even setting interpretation aside, the film captivates on a primal level thanks to a sense of flawless timing and coordination that recalls one of those watches famously made in von Stumberg's country. The dances are impressively choreographed, but so is the plotting.

MOVIEMAKER

**MovieMaker**

[Whole article here](#)

Während meiner Erzählung spüre ich Gänsehaut unter meiner Winterjacke. «Der Film hat mich gepackt», die drei blicken mich unverwandt an, bis einer ungeduldig fragt: «Wie heißt der Film?» - «Syncope!» Mein Wunsch ist in Erfüllung gegangen: Der Publikumspreis Kurzfilm geht an *Syncope* von Linus von Stumberg

FORUM DAS WOCHENMAGAZIN -  
MICHAELA AUNGER

**FORUM**  
DAS WOCHENMAGAZIN

Das ist ein Film, der sehr klar und bewusst audiovisuell mit Körpern, Körperlichkeit und Geräuschen arbeitet und diese in der Inszenierung hervorhebt. Wir hören die Kraft und Energie der einheitlich rhythmisierten Körper: Das Schnipsen des Choreographen, das Knacken der Füße einer Tänzerin, das Stampfen und Klatschen der Gruppe sowie danach auch die Ruhe nach dem Sturm. Damit besitzt der Film eine Intensität, die er gelungen über die Form vermittelt. „Syncope“ ist ein sehr wirkungs- und effektiv inszenierter Kurzfilm. Dieser Film will sein Publikum mitreißen und scheut sich nicht davor bigger than life zu werden.

WERKSCHAU NACHWUCHS(KURZ)FILM



Das Äusserste ist dem Choreographen nicht genug. Tänzerin Whim wird an ihre Grenzen gebracht und darüber hinaus. Der Kurzfilm taucht ein in Strukturen des Missbrauchs in der Tanzszene.

3SAT



In Syncope spielt Regisseur Linus von Stumberg die Hauptrolle selbst und lässt all seine Erfahrung als ausgebildeter Tänzer und Choreograph einfließen. Das bringt dem Film nicht nur sehenswerte Tanzszenen, sondern schafft eine beeindruckende Tiefe für seine Rolle als berechnender, junger Künstler auf dem zum Star. - Nichts für schwache Nerven!

SR – CHRIS IGNATZI



A man with light-colored hair, wearing a dark, high-collared garment, is shown in a dark, futuristic environment. He is looking upwards and to the right with a serious expression. The background is filled with glowing blue and cyan light sources, creating a high-tech, industrial atmosphere. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

# WRITER- DIRECTORS NOTE

I now work as a professional dancer and choreographer for about eight years. So do the cast members of this film. For all of us, it was crucial to create something both authentic and truly captivating.

The film's **ELECTRIFYING** dance sequences are physical and psychological battlegrounds. Hauntingly **IMMERSIVE** sound design makes every breath, footstep, and drop of sweat feel palpable. This is paired with a powerful score that amplifies the **SUSPENSE** and when absent, making the viewer holding their breath – just like the dancers must do.

To “dance for your life” can be translated onto various arts. To have dancers fight against a poison is a spectacle but shall also expose a deeper metaphor.

The on-screen audience, unaware of the poison's grip, views the dance purely as a dazzling performance, showering the dancers with applause. This reflects a reality we often see—suffering hidden behind spectacle, dismissed by superficial praise and press.

The film audience gets confronted with a moral test themselves. They belong to those, whose demanding mindset towards art is growing. With the plot twist of the mysterious voice over at the end, all expectations shall be shattered and tested again.

# INTERVIEW WITH LINUS

by Doreen Kaltenecker, Testkammer

- How did you come up with this story?

Coming from the idea of having somebody dance against a poison, I wrote the screenplay backwards. Through that I created the characters and embedded deeper subjects like abuse of power and crossing lines for the sake of art. To introduce the world and the characters, I created the unique audition concept. Further on, I wanted to work on the conflict of the physical abuse and the success of the piece. With the question of how to deal with the deeds of the choreographer, I wrote an interrogation that should run through the whole film to create tension and then unravel itself of being an interview all along. That should be a hard punch for the audience and as the credits roll, viewers aren't just left entertained; they're left, haunted by the unsettling truths the film dared to confront.

- What visual aspects were important to you?

Each dance scene needed its own unique visual language. The audition should feel very physical, but it works very stylized with controlled dolly shots. This underlines the state of tension when they are holding their breath. The rehearsal sequence should feel documentary and like a real rehearsal – therefore, we shot handheld with a searching approach. The final piece should be the grand spectacle with composed shots. DOP

Gaétan Nicolas and I wanted to jump between the battle on stage and the experience of the audience. It resulted in wild camera dances that should feel like fight scene.

- The choreography is very strong – please tell me more about its creation.

In the script, I described the choreography as detailed possible and wrote out all dramatic and rhythmic plot points. Sarafina Beck, who also plays Lucy (red hair) in the film, then translated the written pieces into movement. She taught me the choreography and we adjusted it together. We then taught the audition piece together and in the rehearsals with the main cast I staged and blocked the scenes already. With the creation of the body language from the effect of the poison, we paid attention to how strong it is in which part, because the more you move the cramps get less.

- How did you find your dancers and how did you work on the acting with them?

All the dancers in the film are friends of mine. We rehearsed most of the acting scenes during our dance training sessions, and I held additional one-on-one sessions with the lead dancer, Lea. Through their experience as performing artists and their closeness to the subject, all dancers were challenged in a new way, but pulled it off with remarkable dedication and expertise.

- Especially the audition scene feels very realistic. How much of the story is authentic?

Audition methods vary widely, and they don't always have to be so cutthroat. But I wanted to reveal the harsh reality of dancers being reduced to numbers and swiftly dismissed, often without any explanation. This lack of clarity is brutal; how can anyone know what the choreographer truly wants?

The audition's climax centers on the final round. Though the snapping and breath-holding sequence is fictional, we choreographed it so that dancers could subtly breathe through their noses in between holds. Yet, in a show of dedication, each dancer held their breath for real, determined to convey authentic physical expression. When asked why, they confidently replied, "Because we can."

-You make a feature film out of the concept. Could you please tell me more that?

The idea for the feature came through my intense work on my character. In the long film the young aspiring choreographer will be the main character of the story, who gets discovered by a huge art gallery who then champions his work. Driven by a mania for authenticity, rooted in traumatic experiences with his mother, he draws inspiration from dark sources and pushes his art too far. Through his journey, we delve into the world of art investment, casting a new light on choreography through breathtaking and dangerous dance scenes. I'm still unsure if I'll play him again—the character in the feature is far more complex than in the short.

- How was it to direct and as well act in the film?

It was a great challenge because I don't have that much acting experience yet. But this gave me an additional entry into the world of the film and was extremely fun. Because we only had five days to shoot the entire film, I could never really look at my own takes. But through this resulted a beautiful trust between the crew, the cast and me.

# LINUS VON STUMBERG



Linus von Stumberg is a filmmaker, international dancer and choreographer.

Linus is best known for his award-winning short film *SYNCOPE* (2023), which he wrote, directed, co-choreographed, edited, and performed in the lead role of the antagonist choreographer. Since its world premiere, the film has screened internationally and been awarded with 20 awards at international festivals, including receiving the Audience Award at the Max Ophüls Prize, the Jury Award at Busan in South Korea, 'Best Thriller' at Aesthetica, and 'Best Screenplay' at Sapporo in Japan.

His debut short film *LION'S CAGE* screened in the Official Selection at Camerimage in 2022. Linus wrote and directed the multi-award-winning music video *SUNSHADES* (2021) for the band Catalyst.

Linus discovered his passion for filmmaking through his background as a professional dancer and story-driven choreographer. Since 2017, he has created and performed work for artists, commercials, and major stages including the Swiss Music Awards and NRJ Fashion Night. His international experience includes collaborations with prominent dance studios and companies such as Snowglobe Perspective (LA), Kinjaz (LA), Studio 68 (London), and PA Dance (Zürich).

Linus is currently in development on his debut feature film based upon his short *SYNCOPE*, with Hangtime International Pictures and represented by Chalcot Square.

IG: @LINUS\_VONSTUMBERG  
REP. BY CHALCOTSQUARE

# FACT SHEET

**Original Title:** SYNCOPE  
**German Title:** SYNCOPE

**Director:** Linus von Stumberg

**Country of Production:** Switzerland  
**Production:** Zürich University of the Arts  
**Year:** 2023  
**Duration:** 21"18"  
**Genre:** Thriller  
**Language:** English

**Cast:** Lea Korner  
Linus von Stumberg  
Sarafina Beck  
Pablo Caprez  
Egon Gerber  
Wittha Tonja

**Screenwriter:** Linus von Stumberg  
**Producer:** Levin Vieth  
**Director of Photography:** Gaétan Nicolas  
**Choreographer:** Sarafina Beck  
**Editors:** Carmen Walker, Linus von Stumberg  
**Music Composers:** Mirjam Skal, Jonas Roulet  
**Sound Designer and Mix:** Daniel Eaton  
**Production Designers:** Lina Doll, Angelika Federer,  
Manuel Hablützel  
**Makeup:** Michaela Mühlemann

**LINUS VON STUMBERG**

Winterthurerstrasse 107,  
8006 Zürich  
+41 76 573 79 03  
lvonstumberg@icloud.com  
Instagram: @linus\_vonstumberg





심사위원특별상

Jury Award

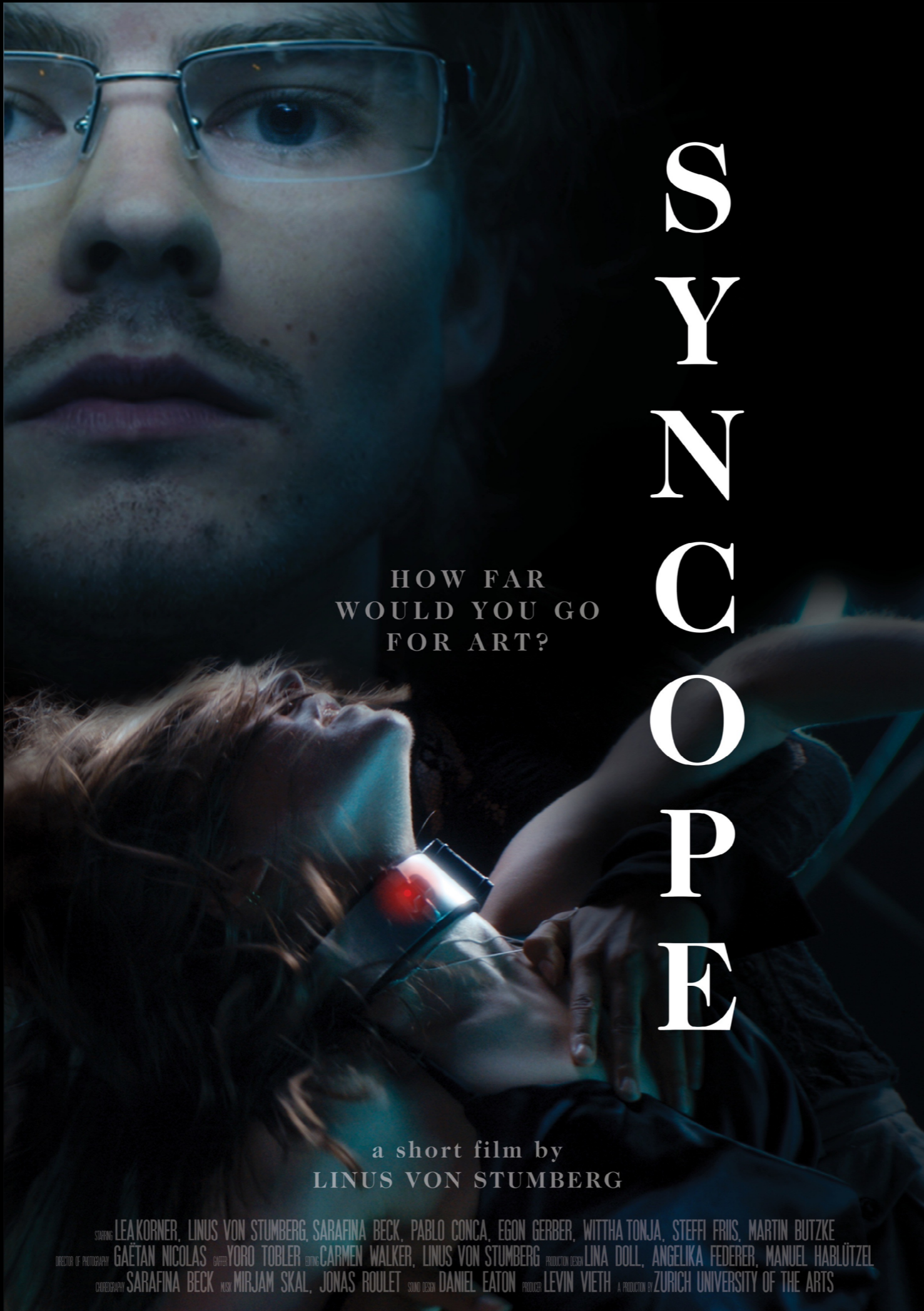
실신  
SYNCOPE

리누스 폰 스템버그  
LINUS VON STUMBERG









# SYNCOPE

HOW FAR  
WOULD YOU GO  
FOR ART?

a short film by  
LINUS VON STUMBERG

CASTING LEA KORNER, LINUS VON STUMBERG, SARAFINA BECK, PABLO CONCA, EGON GERBER, WITTHA TONJA, STEFFI FRIIS, MARTIN BUTZKE  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY GAËTAN NICOLAS COSTUME DESIGNER YORO TOBLER EDITOR CARMEN WALKER, LINUS VON STUMBERG PRODUCTION DESIGNER LINA DOLL, ANGELIKA FEDERER, MANUEL HABLÜTZEL  
CHOREOGRAPHY SARAFINA BECK MUSIC MIRJAM SKAL, JONAS ROULET SOUND DESIGN DANIEL EATON PRODUCER LEVIN VIETH A PRODUCTION BY ZÜRICH UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS







