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## LIFE GOES ON

Members of the main jury of the 18th Asia-Pacific Film Festival Pacific Meridian – about the festival films and serials.

At first, a screenwriter Anton Yarush intrigued the audience, by announcing that he had already prepared a script for a film set in Vladivostok. And filming will begin next spring. Next, Zara Abdullaeva was asked what Asian director she would write a book about, and the film critic and deputy editor-in-chief of the magazine 'Iskusstvo Kino' replied that she would investigate the work of Jia Zhangke. Moreover, this idea just came up after the question.

The members of the main jury talked a lot about the impact of the pandemic on the film process, and their opinions did not always coincide.

"Of course, the pandemic is not an apocalypse, but for the film screening system it is almost a disaster," said Sitora Aliyeva, Chairman of the Jury and program director of Kinotavr. – For Europe and for us in particular. In China and India, where the positions of national cinema are very strong, screenings are fine. As for the rest, including us, whose film industry is supported by the box office of American films, they are in a huge decline. In Berlin, for example, cinemas are closing.

Zara Abdullaeva recalled that the pandemic is not over yet,

so it is still too early to draw conclusions. Anton Yarush even summed up an unexpected line in the conversation, saying that this topic was no longer interesting. "As for the pandemic, filmmakers have begun to comprehend its consequences and impact right now. For example, I have a script finished, where one of the main themes is social distance. But to be honest, it is not very interesting to comprehend what has already happened. It is interesting to predict, do you understand?" – he smiled, and everyone realized that Anton has scripts for any occasion.

Director Ivan I. Tverdovsky noted that it is not easy to evaluate films.

"This is not the first time I have taken part in the jury," he said. – I always agree with pleasure, and then I remember how hard it is. And the point is not even that you evaluate the work of your colleagues, but that you watch a lot of films every day without actually belonging to yourself. But I also agreed to work on the jury of Pacific Meridian because I have tender feelings for this festival, six years ago my film won here (*CORRECTION CLASS*. – VIFF Daily), and generally all my films were shown as part of the "Meridian" programs". It is a great honor for me".

They discussed the fate of the festival cinema. Can films presented at festivals have a successful distribution destiny? "They can," Sitora Aliyeva said confidently. – A simple example from last year: two films from the Kinotavr program, ANOTHER WOMAN and FIDELITY, collected at the box office more than one hundred million rubles each. And if the first film is a comedy, then the second is a social drama. And this means that the topic of the family in the process of divorce, raised in these films, is important and relevant. Which means that their creators have got what the viewers want.

Zara Abdullaeva noted very optimistically that talk about the imminent death of the festival cinema under the yoke of serials should be, as Mark Twain wrote, once again considered exaggerated. "There are a lot of festivals, where the main content is TV series, and they are very popular all over the world. But saying that the series will bury the cinema is premature, – she said. – It's like saying "soon there will be no cinema, no theater, only one television" or "electronic books will replace paper books". So, TV shows and online platforms will live, and cinema will live, and directors will shoot both movies and TV series. Do not worry".

## SHOOT IN A NEW WAY

At the press conference, the FIPRESCI Jury discussed changing trends and strict criteria.

The communication of the FIPRESCI jury members with the press and among themselves this year is partly carried out online. Mohamed Sayed Abdel Rehim is in Egypt, Giuseppe Sedia is in Poland, but both are in touch all the time. For both, this is a difficult test: time zones matter. However, the fact that the Pacific Meridians were not canceled and nevertheless took place made the FIPRESCI jury so happy that they were ready to endure any inconvenience.

"I really hope that after the end of the pandemic, many film festivals will return to the 'face-to-face' format, because for those who make films, who shoot movies, it is very important to talk about cinema, discuss it with each other and communicate, – said Mohamed Sayed Abdel Rehim." The colleagues strongly agreed.

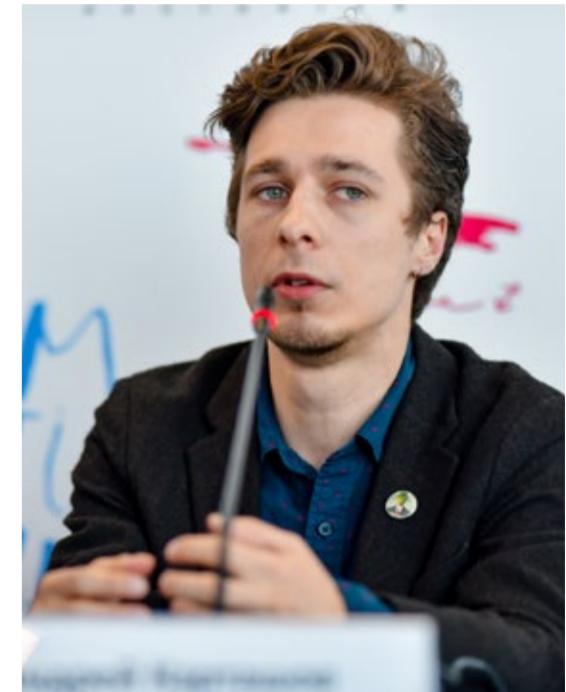
Film critics discussed new standards for Oscar nominations, as well as changes in the system of awarding prizes at the Berlin Festival (as is well known, they stopped dividing prizes for the best role by gender).

Andrei Kartashov does not find anything wrong with this in principle. "The prize system at film festivals has existed since

the days when there were clear roles for actors and actresses, in any film there were the main male and female roles," he said. – Today in cinema everything is different, there are films where there is only one main role, and there are those where there are two main female roles, for example. Let's see how the system will work out. As for the Oscars, I will note that even before the introduction of the new rules, almost all Hollywood films fit into them safely. This is their business, in fact. I think that such standards do not threaten Russian cinema.

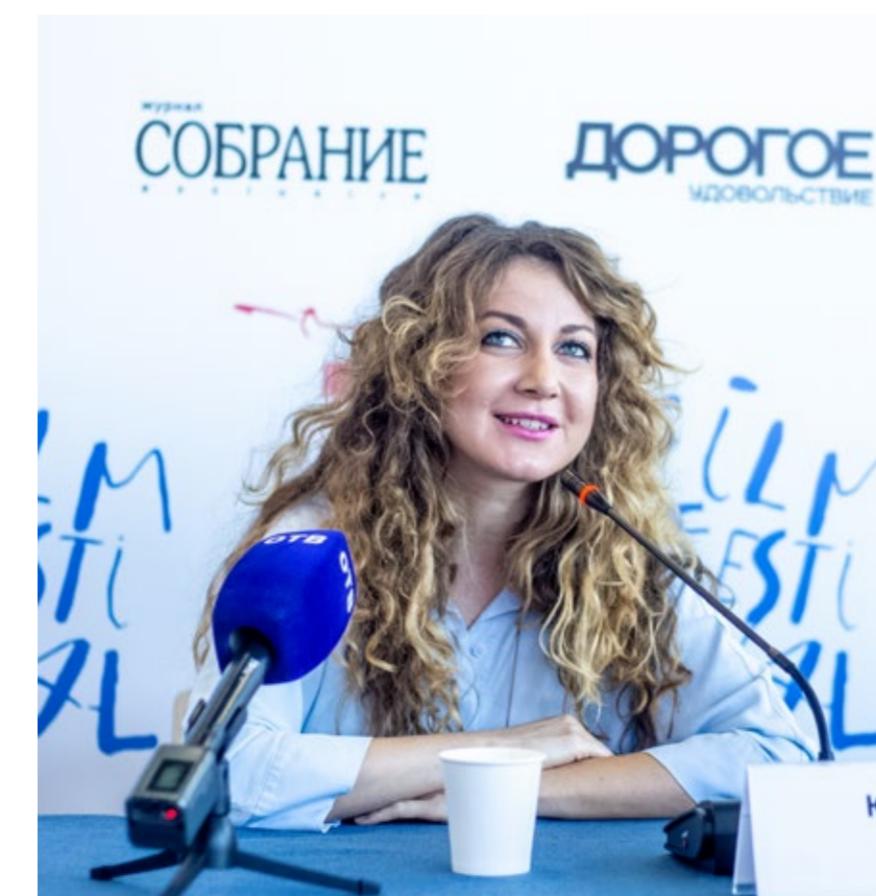
The European colleagues turned out to be a little more concerned about the situation. "If all films are adjusted to some general and rather narrow standard, then a situation may soon develop that if the picture does not touch on the theme of any of the minorities, then it will not be in demand," said Giuseppe Sedia with concern. – Averaging has not benefited anyone yet. And in general, a tight framework is essentially censorship."

Mohamed Sayed Abdel Rehim noted that the work of the jury at film festivals will become more difficult if they have to choose not from variety, but from uniformity. And he emphasized that he was personally very pleased with the diverse program of Pacific Meridian.



## A LITTLE OF NOSTALGIA

At the press conference, the NetPACK jury discussed national preferences and some consequences of the quarantine.



This year the jury of NetPACK at the Pacific Meridian Film Festival is gender-homogeneous – women only. Traditionally, only the representative of Russia, Yulia Gulyan, spoke in person with journalists. Her fellow producer Olga Khlasheva from Kazakhstan and Indian film critic Rashmi Doraiswamy joined the conversation via the Internet.

Olga Khlasheva said that they love Chinese, Korean and Japanese films and TV series in Kazakhstan. "The audience is very interested in such films, therefore, representatives of the cinema of South-East Asia are often invited to Kazakhstan, but the problems of the producers are the same as everyone else's – a lack of funding sources."

Rashmi Doraiswamy was a little nostalgic about the times when the USSR and India willingly showed each other's films. She noted that today Indian commercial cinema has changed a lot, and films with Raj Kapoor, for example, remembered by the Soviet audience, are already out-dated. Synthetic genres are in vogue in the new commercial Indian cinema.

Art house films in India are shown at festivals, online platforms and in numerous film clubs that exist in almost every university in the country. "I am also pleased to note that there is an open path for women in Indian cinema," said Rashmi Doraiswamy. – And this applies not only to actresses, but also to screenwriters, directors, even camerawomen. Besides, I mean both commercial and art-house. And, by the way, documentaries, too."

Film critic from Russia Yulia Gulyan emphasized: the crisis times of this year have affected the film industry in different ways. "This year, the time of crisis has benefited the scriptwriters, because they finally had time to settle down, write and work on projects," she said. "And I know that my colleagues stayed at home and worked non-stop. Those filmmakers who were involved in production really had a hard time. They agreed on any work."

"I am very glad to be in Vladivostok, to watch the films offered by Pacific Meridian," continued Yulia. – I am very interested in how we will manage to work, because now the NetPACK jury is entirely female. There is something beautiful about it, in my opinion. By the way, as a film critic, I see that male critics have a more feminist-oriented view than women, which is good."



# KIRILL KHACHATUROV

Director of NAKED

— Could you tell about the technology you use as an animation director?

— It is made the way three-dimensional animation is usually made, with a computer and 3D software. I mean, this is the same technology that is used to create full-length animations. The only difference is that I work alone (with a little help from my friends). I strive to do everything quickly, so I came up with my own method of work to speed up the process. As a result, I made a 15-minute film in about six months – it is very fast, especially when you work alone.

The point is that when you work on a big commercial animation film, the shot itself – the way it looks – is done quickly, but a lot of time is spent on correcting various inaccuracies and errors. I have never made big commercial animations, but I have worked in production, in television, and I know that this is usually the case for me. Therefore, at some point I decided not to try to clean everything, but on the contrary, to make a raw image quality, which, in my opinion, also gives more liveliness to the picture.

What is more is the photogrammetry technology: I take pictures of objects and then use these images in my animation. This is kind of a documentary component – I was depicted in all the pictures in the film. For example, in NAKED, you can see the entrance where the characters hang out – this is my own entrance in Pechatniki District, where I once lived – it is old, but very textured.

— Your first film is called PROTOCORBA. What is more, Protocorba is the name of the entire artistic universe you

have created. What is typical and unique about it?

— The rules that I formulated in Protocorba are typical for it. This film came out quite by accident. When I first entered the Moscow School of New Cinema (MSNC), I did not plan to study animation. Back then, I wanted to make feature films with real actors. I had been engaged in animation before, since the mid-2000s, and after 2010, I put it to good for a while. However, by the end of my studies, I came up with the idea to implement all my knowledge in animation gained at MSNC. I did not work on it for six to seven years, and the technology reached the point that allowed you to create a high-quality picture. I tried, and it worked! PROTOCORBA is a random film, because it is made from experiments – small sketches and situations my characters were involved into. This is exactly what created the universe with certain rules they follow. The film provoked a dialogue with commercial animation and turned out to be very anti-commercial. If there is a certain narrative in an ordinary film, then in Protocorba I tried to break this narrative, I wanted it not to exist any longer.

Naked follows the same rules and laws; it originates exactly from the universe called PROTOCORBA. Nothing happens to people there, nothing will happen, and their best friend is the wind.

— Attempts to break the narrative are quite normal for MSNC. However, does not NAKED contradict this? It seems like there is a story to be told.

— For me, this is a kind of balance, because if we talk about drama, I believe that there is no drama in NAKED. I mean a real

drama, when you compare yourself with the character, when he gets into the twists and turns, when he is confronted by the antagonist. Nevertheless, I did not want to make the film completely abstract and not narrative. I already have one (Protocorba). So, I tried to explore other areas – gradually, step by step. NAKED is actually the first approach to a narrative drama film. Yet, I tried to leave many dramatic elements behind the scenes. I quickly figured out how to make many scenes, but I deliberately refused it because I did not want to clutter the image with my ideas. Let the film go on – as a director I should not interfere with this. Thus, I cut the scenes – some of them appear to look unfinished and some even uninitiated. In addition, since I still have an aesthetic style, I admit that the audience is familiar with superhero movies. People understand that if something happened to a character in the laboratory, then later, they will watch how this character experiences what happened and cannot become akin to a new force. I leave stuff like this out of brackets, because people already know it.

— Recently, we have seen a surge of anti-superhero movies, in which this power tends to be desacralized and destroyed. Do you see a trend in this?

— Sure. Firstly, this is because there is too much superhero today – not only in movies, but also in pop culture in general. Some authors work a lot with this, while for others it naturally generates disagreement. My film is also a discussion with similar cinematography. Here the hero gets superpowers and immediately decides to go save the world. He drops all his



desires, easily rebuilds his own life. His opponent acts in the same way: having received superpower, he decides to destroy this world to hell. And they go to fight each other. Why? This is complete nonsense. Of course, a person, having acquired super abilities, will live an ordinary life and get used to these abilities. Of course, talking about his life is not so interesting, because nothing happens in it, despite the fact that he has superpowers. And my film is just about such people who have become strong, but do not run to save the world.

— Let us return to MSNC. Is it true that the animation director is a kind of exception for this School?  
— Yes, there is no one there who does animation.

— To what extent are the postulates preached by Dmitry Mamulya, the Artistic Director of the School, applicable in animation?

— They are applicable, because these philosophical postulates work in fiction, documentary, and animation. My situation seems even more advantageous, because very few people apply all these principles in animation. Today, it is extremely rare to find animation that is in the same field with the Romanian New Wave. In a year, I have watched, perhaps, one film of that kind; it was the Polish film ACID RAIN directed by Tomek Popakul.

— You mentioned that you photograph places and use images. What about the characters – do they have

**prototypes? Where do you get such faces and shapes?**

— There are no direct prototypes. Since I do everything alone and try to save time, I created a set of characters for the first two films. During the quarantine period, I slightly altered these characters and increased their number. Now, I have about nine heroes who, as actors, are “filmed” for me in different roles.

Previously, I used to make characters similar to some types. But lately, I have been taking different people, friends, actors, and passers-by to make aggregated images. Although people always recognize someone. When I posted images from PROTOCORBA on Instagram, my friends sent me a picture – they say, look, here is a person just like your character. The type is more recognizable.

— Do we understand correctly, that you do animation in your free time, but generally, you work at Yandex?

— Yes, you do.

— Usually, Yandex employees are overworked. When do you have time to make animations?

— At night, of course. There is no other option. However, there was a period when I stopped doing animation, but did generative graphics. I learned to program, and completely new opportunities opened up before me – they can greatly save time! I would work slower at Yandex if I did not know programming and did not know how to pattern many things.

— Are you drawn to feature films?

— Until I have exhausted the animation resource – I am not. But of course I think about it. When I studied at MSNC, I made just short feature films. Now, they are stored on my hard disk, I do not show them to anyone, they are very student-like. I know that I can shoot feature films; I just do not feel like this now.

— Do you often feel like a person who has talents, but they are not needed?

— I guess that every person experiences such feelings in modern Russia, and maybe in the modern world as well. Perhaps this sensation is illusory and in fact, there are no talents, and you just think that you can do something, but you can do no more than others can. And when you fight this feeling, you realize that you really have the talent to direct, to create animation, design, or coding. And you are sure of that. However, sometimes you are not sure at all – for example, I dream of myself as a musician, I have a guitar next to the table, and another one. But this is all illusory, because I will never become a musician. I do not devote due time to this.

— And you have already become the animation director...

— Now, I can say with no hesitation that I am the director. Probably a year ago, when I was asked what I was doing, I said that I was a designer. Now, I say that I am the director. Because my directing is probably much better than design. Although the design is also very good for me.



# IVAN I. TVERDOVSKIY

Director of CONFERENCE

— In your CONFERENCE you went back to the method that once brought you fame – a technique, balancing between the fiction and non-fiction cinema, combining true-to-life, almost documentary renditions with set-ups.

— I believe this to be more of a generalization, used by cinema critics, since this film has a very remote connection to the documentary genre. Sometimes when you work with an event, you have no moral right to go beyond its original scope. But fiction films allow you to have more distance from reality.

— Some monologues seem to be almost verbatim. Is it an illusion?

— The scriptwriting method involved live interviews with witnesses to capture feelings and emotions of real people, instead of made-up characters. Also the script did not have pre-written dialogues. I always work this way, and this time was no exception. That is why actors' improvisation and working with the image within a certain framework provides this effect.

— What did the script start with?

— I happened to be at the Dubrovka Theatre Center. Many years after the tragedy this building almost in the heart of

ally wanted this film to happen. There were producers who were just interested in the topic. Some of them were scared. Ekaterina Mikhailova and Konstantin Fam appeared in this project a little later on, but, most importantly, they quickly turned out to be the like-minded people. They might have seen this project in their own way. But they are young and talented people with their own professional perspective, that is why we have become a team.

— Did you foreign partners join the project later?

— Yes, everyone wanted to see something more or less finished. Then the Eurimages joined in, later the Estonian Cinema Foundation. All in all, the project involved five companies from Russia, Estonia, Great Britain and Italy.

— Why did you choose the tragedy of NORD-OST among all other events from your childhood – Kursk disaster, terrorist attacks on Beslan and Pushkinskaya metro station, house explosions.

— I have never been to the Caucasus. I was barely ten, when houses were blown up. I remember my parents being on watch in our house, there was a schedule for the

— Does it mean that you had no need in inviting consultants to the project?

— I worked with Philipp Avdeev and Roman Shmakov who had been NORD-OST hostages. They helped a lot. An interesting fact is that people remember the beginning of the siege and the first night in a similar way. But then their recollections start to differentiate from one another. People remember the same facts in different order. So we go back to the topic of memory again. My characters, just like the participants of those events, are entitled to their own version of the events in details. So I really needed Philipp and Roman to help me with keeping the story true, for it not to go outside that space. They were not just the participants of the event, but wonderful actors who kept other performers from altering vital and fundamental concepts just with their presence. It was really important for me to have people who did not participate in real events too. Otherwise we would have ventured into the journalistic territory, and the talk about the event could not have expanded beyond the event itself.

— Apart from the topic of NORD-OST itself, the film involves the principal ideas you discuss in your works

— generation gap, while age-wise you are getting closer to the 'older side'.

— Yes, but that shows a stereotypical nature of our society. I realize that I am not a teenager anymore, but healthy infantilism and an easy-going outlook on life, that younger people have, make me break the traditional pattern. I think outside the concept of age and appreciate it in other people. You can be a child in the morning, but in the evening you teach students or pack your bags to go to a film festival with your fourth feature film.

— Well, it is difficult to start a family when you are on a crusade to avenge all children who feel betrayed.

— Different systems of values definitely exist. Now I am more annoyed with booster seats in the back of a car. It does not mean I have always been annoyed with that or will continue to be. Just that right now I am more interested in other things.

— Your point of view on relationships is quite clear in your ZOOLOGY: everybody is more interested in your tail than in you personally. Or is this not an issue for you anymore?

look like. It feels like magic: you come to the set very tense, but she says something, and you suddenly feel lighter.

— Were there many takes?

— No, three or five, I think. If Ksenia does not like something, she comments on that, but always praises your work too. It is such a motivation! I really learned a lot from her because I am usually very critical towards actors. And this is a huge mistake on my part. I think that if something went a certain way, it was supposed to be that way. When you work as an actor, you see how difficult it is because actors are very sensitive about it. They feel stressed when a director does not like something, and they need to do many takes.

— Was it easy for you to change? Are you her actor first and her director second?

— I see that it might seem a bit of a nepotism, but it is not like that. When I worked on CONFERENCE, I did not ask Ksenia to audition right away. Even though I knew that the story was close to her heart, and I think very highly of her as an actress. She did an amazing job in 14 STEPS by Maksim Shaykin who, unfortunately, is not with us anymore. Her acting was phe-

— Philipp and Roman came to me because they trust me. Philipp was in my CORRECTION CLASS. He understands that I do not want to hype on the topic or benefit from it. There are some things he told me personally, but they are not in the film. Roman was also supposed to be in CORRECTION CLASS, but that time he was too busy at the theatre. There are some scenes in the film where he opened up and told things he had never told anyone before.

— There are some ridiculous scenes in the film that sort of "deflate" the overall grandeur. From the ubiquitous vacuum cleaner on the screen and headshots of Yan Tsapnik who is typically seen as a comedian, to inflatable dolls and mock references to BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN. What was the creative process behind this?

— I disagree. Yan Tsapnik is a great Russian actor, I don't care what roles others see him in. He had a long career in the Bolshoi Drama Theatre. If the film industry discovered him later in his career and only sees him as a comedian, that is not his problem. And we have inflatable mannequins, not dolls. Even when you rehearse the film, you use some objects to symbolize certain things or people in the scene. So why cannot characters use the same method?



Moscow still has not been renovated. But it is not a memorial, but a functioning concert hall. Every day the fountain circus show is held there. The marble columns in the lobby still bear the traces of bullets. So, that is how the talks about the memory started.

— You presented your CONFERENCE to the film industry in Cannes. How did you describe it?

— As a story about memory, post traumatic stress, the terrorist attack on the theatre center in 2002. Speaking about the modern history in 2000's, the topic of international terrorism is familiar to almost all people on our planet. This discussion topic is relevant in cinema of any nation.

— You often said that it was hard to find a producer for this film. Why? Was it due to fear, mistrust?

— There were different reasons. Somebody believed I would fail. It is a different kind of project, unlike any other of my films. In that sense I understood this sort of mistrust. There were people who truly did not get my reasons for making non-commercial and meaningful cinema. They see such directors as those who are unable to move into the sphere of a serious cinema industry due to their lack of professional skills. They could not understand why I needed to make CONFERENCE. But I still went to the meetings because I re-

— residents to keep watch, but in several days that idea was abandoned. But NORD-OST is different. One of my schoolmates died there – she was a hostage. Our classes were dismissed that day because teachers just could not bear it. Friends of my parents were engaged in the musical itself, so they were really worried. Therefore, that was not just like watching the news on TV, it was a part of my reality. That is why this event left a much deeper mark.

— When someone shoots a film, based on real events, there is always someone who says, "I was there, and it wasn't like that, why didn't you tell about this or that?" Does it bother you?

— I never speak about generations or use these categories. These are all individual stories. It is hard to say where it all comes from. I do not have troubled relationship with my parents. Probably, every person has some basic set of childhood traumas that we cannot avoid.

— Do you feel the need to blame the Soviet generation: why did they vote, kept silent, basically sacrificed us to the cause?

— Mostly not. Everybody who experienced something has their own attitude towards the event, it is fine. But I can say that I am 99% in the material, having thoroughly studied the whole chronology of the event. I know the immense amount of details. I researched all the available sources, talked to a huge amount of people who had been there. I am neither a documentalist, nor a journalist, I create my story from my own perspective. The only thing, required of me, is prudence. This is a common work approach to a historical matter. So it is also fine if someone disagrees with my interpretation of the story.

— But you show more than just an offence in your works, it is a betrayal!

— Well, there is something wrong with me. Me specifically, not my parents.

— But you place yourself on the 'younger side' of the

— Just like any other director I use my films to discuss everyday problems, the unsolvable kind. That is why we do what we do. Not to solve them, but to learn how to live with this insolubility. Life takes an independent course that does not have to coincide with your art.

— Ksenia Zueva's INTERVENTION is presented in the RUSSIAN CINEMA program also, and Ivan I. Tverdovskiy there is different from the one we all know? Is it another side of you?

— I am not a thug. (*Loughs.*) It was an interesting experience. The first day of the shooting was the happiest day of shooting in my life. Yes, you work your butt off, but then you leave the set with no responsibilities. When you are a director, after the day is over you keep thinking about not finishing something, adding scenes, calling one person, writing to another, changing things, rewriting scenes, rereading the playback. While here you just do your job and leave. I really enjoyed that feeling of being footloose. All the while feeling responsible and afraid to let Ksenia down because I am not a professional actor.

— Your acting seems to be improvised.

— There was a lot of improvisation involved. Ksenia has a more flexible way of working than I do. She has a topic that she discusses with you and a suggestion on how it should

— So, you didn't use all these visuals to intensify suspicion over suffering and penance of the "guilty" older generation, did you? It would have been justified from the artistic point of view.

— I do not share this perspective, I have not done it intentionally. Any film has its own course and development that it dictates. I see all this as a completely realistic scene, not as a peek into somebody's perverted mind. I did not plan to add satiric effect. If this new reality appears in the film, let it happen right in front of the viewer.

— Also, there is this shift from showing real participants of the events on the screen to actors who read the script. This is what makes you doubt the reality of the situation.

— I would prefer to call it a break from the actual event. It is not an accident that we never say the word 'Nord-Ost' in the film. I wanted to avoid a journalistic approach. This is the way I speak to any person who experienced any tragic event.

— What do you plan for your next project?

— Natalia Mokritskaya and I collaborate on THE FLOOD. This film is based on works by Yevgeny Zamyatkin who has short stories called THE FLOOD and THE NORTH. I wrote a script, transferring the events to our time. The script was approved by the Ministry of Culture, so now we are searching for more sponsors.



## LUO YUMO

Director of LONG DAY

— At the beginning, I wanted to clarify: the police in China have the right to detain a mother if her three-year-old child is left alone in the apartment, don't they?

— The Chinese police have the right to detain anyone who violates the law. As for children staying at home alone, in their opinion, it is another matter and has nothing to do with crime. The offender and his family are divided.

— Why is your film black and white?

— I chose black and white first because the events in the movie are real events that happened in the past; the second is because I do not want to show a colorful world, where people's lives are gray, cold, and lacking in light.

— How did you look for a structure of the film? The structure is pretty non-standard, isn't it?

— The structure of the film is prosaic. The characters are loosely connected through time and space. The structure of the film is not standard, but this structure is suitable for this film. I was inspired by watching movies of Abbas Kiarostami.

— Do you like to experiment with narrative and dramatic form?

— I like to experiment with narrative and dramatic forms. LONG DAY is just the beginning. I will keep trying.

— You worked as a director, screenwriter, producer, cinematographer, editor, and composer of the LONG DAY. You couldn't trust all this to someone else or just wanted to feel yourself as an author as much as possible?

— I myself prefer to only serve as a director and screenwriter, but I don't have the budget to invite more people, so I can only do more within my ability.

— You have rather long plans in the film – people eat for a long time, the girl listens to music and writes a note. Tell us about the tempo in the film? How did you work with it?

— Eating for a long time is because this is the only time the food delivery person can sit down and relax during the day. Unfortunately, this is disturbed by his work, and this is the beginning of a tragedy-filled day for the food delivery

man. A girl listening to music and reading a book is to pave the way for the next few conflicts between visible and invisible characters. At the same time, it also assumes an experimental function; of course, you do not think she is in a relationship when she reads. Are the characters in Blanc's paintings? Writing a note is a continuation of listening to music, and it is a challenge to the entire social atmosphere. The text on the note comes from the classic quotations from George Orwell's novel "1984". I made a joke at the end of this classic quotation. The words describe the pain of a co-tenant. This book is exactly what a girl reads when she listens to music.

— Why did you choose Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 8?

— Tragic stories need sad music. It is the most suitable music I have ever listened to, and there is nothing more suitable than this.

— The title of your film, of course, is reminiscent of Eugene O'Neill's famous play LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT and its screen adaptation by Sidney Lumet. There were also characters like yours, overwhelmed with compassion, but unable to help each other. What references did you have? What did you watch, read while filming?

— I do not have any reference materials. The original script is full of contradictions and conflicts. It has a standard structure. When I started shooting, I threw away the script and did not want obvious connections or obvious conflicts. Just like painting Chinese paintings, I cut out a lot of things, leaving them blank. Everything follows intuition. When shooting, I only had the appearance of all the characters in the script. I have forgotten the others. I only sleep 2 hours a day. I finished it. Although I am not satisfied enough, it is because the production funds limited me.

— Do the days seem long to you?

— Yes, these days are very long, and I waited for a long time, and I can't seem to see the end.



# MICHAEL ARCOS

Director of *VALERIO'S DAY OUT*

**— Did you do the graphic novel called LULA first? What was it?**

— The graphic novel came first. In a stream of consciousness, I wrote Valerio's dialogue over black and white images of cats from a 1980's cat book. I cut them out and stitched them together to send to my long distance lover. We're together now. The movie came after I challenged myself to make a video diary from the perspective of Valerio. Send me your address and I'll send you a copy of LULA.

**— How did you choose artistic means to tell the story on the screen?**

— This project was made from compulsion, obsession, and intuition. It's the second installment from the CAT TRILOGY that I've been experimenting with since 2011. I'm wrapping up on the final chapter called PALOMA'S PIT.

They all carry the same aesthetic language.

**— It is written in your credits: "death count design inspired by – Dan Swenson". Could you tell who's Dan and how he influenced you?**

— Dan Swenson created a similar death count design for The Advocate, the local newspaper. I was first introduced to Valerio through the news article that Dan was involved in. The headline read "A jaguar escapes his enclosure and goes on a killing spree," or something similar, alluding that it may have killed humans. I'm obsessed with fear-mongering media headlines and their manipulative tactics. The Audubon Zoo is about a mile from my house in New

Orleans, Louisiana. I had these great images of watching a Jaguar walking down the street from my porch.

Dan's design was intriguing to me because I was confused if there was a humorous element to it or if they were dead serious. The design was similar to a food menu specifying the meat type. I fell in love and lifted his design. Thank you, Dan!

**— In the credits you also thank a several zoos at once. How did they help you?**

— These are all the zoos where we recorded jaguars in their enclosures. We captured a number of jaguars pacing back and forth or looking melancholy. The majority of the b-roll footage was recorded in Medellin, Colombia. I have decent memories from going to zoos as a child but feel that they are archaic.

**— Did the jaguar in the movie get a fee?**

— We went to meet Valerio when they released him back to his enclosure at the zoo. I brought him flowers and he gave me full consent. Valerio was 3 when he had his day out but recently I was invited to his 5th birthday party where the Audubon Zoo staff made him a meat cake. We tried to arrange for him to do the red carpet when we brought the project to Sundance and planned on bringing him to the 18th Vladivostok International Film Festival. I haven't had the chance to properly pay him what I owe him.

**— You began with editing on VHS and even exhibited your works. How did you get started with this?**

— In high school during the late 90's, I had access to decommissioned and donated 1980's television production equipment. It was camera-to-VHS and the edits were made. It was a large and clunky work space that took up three rooms. My teacher (Mrs. Berg, RIP) built up my confidence as an editor. I was selling rare bootleg videos on eBay for four solid years 'til they finally kicked me out of the site. I've been working with magnetic tape since 1997.

**— You're a musician also. Where does music fit into your cinema and your life?**

— I have been teaching myself audio production for years. It naturally transitioned its way into video. In my house I keep closeby a vibraphone, a wurlitzer organ, and a drum set. I've composed music for some of my work. I have a steel drum band called ISLAND HOTEL.

**— How do you imagine your full-length film? Can it be done in a similar interesting form, or is it still necessary to work with more traditional means?**

— Good question. We'll see.



# SHUN IKEZOE

Director of *SEE YOU IN MY DREAMS*

You only find out what you shot later, after having developed the film, most of the time you end up with not even half of what you intended. But things that you had not even imagined (that you hadn't intended) are there too. The time it took me to reorganize the film structure based on this was a time for me to think about the film and discuss it. Since the film theme is personal, and I had to find some distance from it, I think that it was very important for the work that I took that time.

**— Tell us a little about your actors? How did you choose them? Did you give them any references?**

— Yukino Murakami was not supposed to have my grandmother re-created. She represents the universal woman. It can be a living, past life, or a person from the other world. Shinya Ueno is not playing my grandfather either. They played the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

**— In your previous movie JUJUBA you tell about yourself and your stepmother. Do you think cinema should be based on personal experience?**

— I hope that personal experience is the starting point and that it will lead us to places we cannot even imagine. The deeper I dig into my personal memories, the more I share with the audience. Also, the intonation of the language in this film is Kansai-ben (the Osaka dialect), and I try to keep my identity in mind.

**— What do you understand better about yourself and your family when you are filming this?**

— My family knows surprisingly little about each other. Particularly, my grandmother has never told me much about herself as it is. I do not know if it is true when I hear her talking about her memories. Memory is a vague thing. Her memories can pass through me and I can tell you. It is more important to imagine than to understand.

**— By the way, what did your grandmother say when you told her that you were making a movie about her?**

— My grandmother is a very shy person, so I did not think it was good to turn the camera on her. What is more, even though the film originated in my grandmother's stories, in the end I wanted to make it into a universal tale about women, so I thought it would be better not to show my grandmother's figure. Since I wanted to collect her stories as naturally as possible, I shared her daily life, as she cooked or took a nap. Whenever she allowed me to record her, I started recording and talked with her as she relaxed, and recorded the entire conversation. I finished the script by writing what she said. In the film, my grandmother's voice is the main character.



# THE HOUSE OF THE SPIRITS

**Valentina Romanova-Chyskyyray is a unique woman. Being a pretty successful singer in her native Yakutia, she made her acting debut in SCARECROW that brought her both the Kinotavr festival award for the Best Actress, and nationwide popularity.**

— Would you, please, tell us a few words about the origins of your family name?

— I was born, and my parents, my ancestors called me Valentine, and also I have this regal family name – Romanova. But since I am a Sakha, I made up a stage name for myself. It is Chyskyyray, meaning "the one with a divine voice or a creator".

— So, does your stage name reflect your trade?

— Yes. You know, stage names should be treated with caution. Because it can either eat you alive, consume you or promote you. My stage name was created with the help of my mentor Elena Sleptsova-Kuorsunnaakh, so I would like to say "makhal" to her ("thank you" in Yakut language). – VIFF Daily).

— Do you feel that your life changes because of what is happening to you right now?

— Indeed, this is a door to a new life that I have opened. A beautiful road, but a challenging one too. I have performed before, being an ethnic and jazz artist, in music festivals of Europe, America. I performed in Russia as well – with different musicians, for example, Alexander and Dmitry Bril, and then I discovered a new world as a theatre actress. Back at my local theatre they made a play for me, it is called I FLY. This play is also successful; it even got an award in the category of monodrama and small-stage plays in Europe. I wrote the music for all the songs, and lyrics are by a poet and my mentor, Elena Sleptsova-Kuorsunnaakh. This is also a drama piece, and it made me one step closer to SCARECROW. Teaching is another passion of mine, I give singing classes. Show how to breathe, to develop vocal cords.

— And all of that is taking a back seat now, right?

— Well, cinema is a new experience for me, so I was intrigued by it, and I wanted to travel.

— Was it your intention to reinvent yourself as an actress? Or was it a lucky accident?

— You know, I have always been drawn to beauty. I dreamt of a red carpet, but it was Grammy that I wanted to get. But I got the Best Actress Award at the Kinotavr Film Festival. And the red carpet was in a different place. I have never seen myself in a film festival. But it turned out to be fascinating. I am enjoying this. I enjoy working in front of the camera.

— Do you remember what you felt when they presented you with the award at the Kinotavr?

— I was really proud of my region, my mentors, relatives, family. It is a milestone. Especially in my age – if I were younger, it would have definitely messed with my head. But being older, you see such things in a different light. It feels like you are born again.

— Your part in SCARECROW is very challenging – both physically, and psychologically. Did you ever regret agreeing to this project?

— No, I never doubt my actions, even when I misbehave. It is all a part of life experience. SCARECROW chose me. It is our baby, an honest, beautiful, talented one. That is why it was easy to make this film. It took me about ten days, because the theatre and my students needed me. Also, I am an improviser, so it was useful in that case too. I put on a mask and take it off just as quickly. Many people do it differently, it

changes their lives. You can do it better or worse. Or you can find a balance. I do not invest myself one hundred per cent.

— So it is not even one hundred per cent for you, right?

— Yes, because if I invest all of me, what would be left of my life? That is why I found a perfect balance. When I am on stage with a concert, I let myself go. There is so much freedom there. Freedom-freedom. I really live there. Even if it is a five-minute performance, it feels like you live a whole life there. All my friends and mentors helped me to prepare myself for taking part in such a difficult film. We also performed some rituals. Even this morning we had a ritual.

— What kind of rituals?

— Feeding your deities.

— How does this happen?

— On set I always asked for forgiveness if I happened to do something wrong, to make a mistake; so they would protect us, our deities. Zucchini pancakes with some butter are used as an offering to ask for health, or for the festival to go well, our baby – the film- to be successful. But health is a priority

— these are the difficult times we live in. On set I always fed the fire spirit, the earth spirit. When I had a hard day on set, I always had a cleansing ritual, because the film itself is very serious, so it was supposed to be treated seriously as well.

— Do you believe in the magic of cinema?

— It does exist, just like theatre magic. There is a spirit, you need to respect it. Cinema has its own smell, theatre has a different one. You can miss it one time, but feel it later. When I enter my local theatre, I always say hello. If you are a sincere person, the stage will never let you go. It is a different planet, and ever since I was a child I have been dreaming of getting there. And I did.

— There is a belief that if you have a good thing going in your life, you have to sacrifice something for it later. What is your sacrifice? What do you have to abandon in order to have something new?

— Certainly, there is something like that, but my ancestors have always protected me. There are some hardships though. It is always like that with me: first everything is good, then it's hard, or first it is hard, and then the good part comes. Festivals have this strong energy, but this energy comes with a price – I felt it even at the Kinotavr. Of course, an artistic person can overstep the boundaries sometimes, but it should not be done. Only moderately.

— What do you do when you are not on set or giving another concert?

— Unfortunately, I have no time at all. But I love gardening – planting flowers, taking care of them, we have very fertile lands. Lots of vegetables. Watermelons, everything grows there. But summers are short. Also I like to crochet, but have no time to do it.

— Another topic: it is impressive that audience in your republic loves their national cinema so much. Basically, you have done something that the Russian cinema industry has been striving for years to achieve. How did that happen?

— Yes, this is a very good question. Cinemas and theatres are very popular in our republic. People of all ages go to watch films. It is always a full house in cinemas.

— Your films are successful commercially as well.

— Yes, they are. What does that mean? You need to go back to your roots. Roots are important.

— Roots?

— Yes, roots. Every ethnicity should know their roots and promote them. What makes a nation different from others? Its folklore. Songs, dances. Each nation has its unique spiritual culture. So, only if you go back to your roots, you have your special energy, unlike any other; my people live in a remote area that all these taxes won't reach. (Laughs.) That is why my people are very talented. One is an artist, another one is an awesome developer. Or a good singer, a poet. We are few, but we seem to live in a world of our own.

— Dmitry Davydov, the director of SCARECROW, is not even a Yakut, and he does not know the language, I believe. Do you consider him to be "your guy"?

— Well, he is just like us, he is a country guy. Half Sakha, half Slavic. My daughter is also half Slavic and half Sakha. He knows the language of his ancestors, he admitted. And his wife is a Sakha, their children – well, she is about to give birth very soon, I think.

— What cinema did you watch in your childhood?

— I have always loved Soviet films. They have their own style. Speaking of Russian ones, I like Yevgeny Mironov, he was in the APOSTLE series. I also love fairy tales. It is actually very hard to be an actor in one. Just like in a comedy. You are either funny or not. And a fairy tale should be treated with caution, because it could very easily be turned into a drama or a tragedy.

I have many favorites. I enjoy comedies, like THE GIRLS. I see myself as a character from this film. Or COME TOMORROW, PLEASE.

— You probably even sing the famous folk song VDOL PO PITERSKOY ("Down the Peterskaya Road"), do you?

— (Laughs.) When I studied, I sang a lot of things, even V GORNITSE MOYEI SVETLO ("There is Light in My Chamber"), but I always improvise, have my own perspective on songs, characters. Dmitry gave me artistic freedom. I stuck to the plot, but added things as well. I tried not to overthink it – just played the part. You should not play smart, that is it.

— What do you do when you are not on set or giving another concert?

— Unfortunately, I have no time at all. But I love gardening – planting flowers, taking care of them, we have very fertile lands. Lots of vegetables. Watermelons, everything grows there. But summers are short. Also I like to crochet, but have no time to do it.

— We noticed your passion for Instagram. Are you a blogger now as well?

— (Laughs.) Yes. You could say so. When I first discovered Instagram, there were very few subscribers. But I thought that I needed to keep up with the modern times – and my assistant is now in charge of my account.

— SMM manager?

— (Laughs.) Yes! A young girl, now she is about to open her photo studio. There is some progress.



# FORTRESS TO IMPRESS

Vladivostok is a very cinematic city, and many participants and guests of the Pacific Meridian Festival, who happened to visit it, unanimously acknowledge that. You basically can start filming here right away.

As for the guest of the Pacific Meridian this year, who have already visited the Pospelov Fort and experienced the wonder of the Vladivostok Fortress first hand, they know for sure where you can find the most camera-friendly place in the Far Eastern Region.

Views from the Pospelov Fort take your breath away with their magnificence. You can see the Egersheld District, FEFU campus in all its glory, the Eastern Bosphorus – right in front of you.

And now anyone can see it with their own eyes. You just need to come to the Pospelov Fort that has been a part of the State Memorial Museum "Vladivostok Fortress" for a year now. You can enjoy an amazing view from the rampart of the Fort – the one that conceals and protects this fortified structure.

We should not forget, though, that this impressive naval fortress has always been a peaceful place. According to the words of Nikolay Kladov, the naval theorist, at the time of building the fortifications, "The fortress in Primorye will not fire a single shot because the enemy will consider attacking it useless, and this would be the best way to serve its purpose".

Having become a part of the museum, the Fort acquired a better road, internal navigation system, information boards next to posterns, caponiers, water disposal system, powder cellar. Besides, since the lockdown restrictions have been lifted, they organize guided excursions in the forts of the museum every weekend (till early November, then the Fort will be closed for visitors till spring).

Of course, you'd better start your acquaintance with the

been more than a century since this fortification structure was officially named a fort.

The guide told everyone many fascinating things. For instance, about the moat. The Vladivostok Fortress uses a system of dry moats due to the local climate. The moats were paved with smooth stones to make it harder to go up and down – for the enemy, of course.

But the moat was not the only obstacle! Even plants protected the fort from potential attackers. Of course, during the fort construction most of the vegetation was destroyed, that is why they restored it in the access areas and the rampart – it was a camouflage. Hedges of wild rose with their thorns were especially appreciated.



