

FEST Forward, Project book

Women in film



Aurora's Sunrise

Documentary

DIRECTOR

Inna Sahakyan

PRODUCER

Vardan Hovhannisyan

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Bars Media Documentary Film Studio

APPROX. BUDGET OF THE FILM

577.168,00 EUR

FINANCING IN PLACE

343.370,00 EUR

CONTACT

Bars Media Documentary Film Studio

20 Sepuh St.

0028 Yerevan, Armenia

tel. +(37410) 22 67 33

info@barsmedia.am

www.barsmedia.am

Synopsis

Aurora Mardiganian was one of the biggest yet most improbable celebrities of the Golden Age of silent film. Born in 1901 in the east of the Ottoman Empire, she was faced with the horror of the Armenian Genocide when she was only 14 years old. Put on a death march to the Syrian desert with the rest of her family, she was witness to each of their deaths until she was the only survivor. Forced into sexual slavery, it was only through luck, courage, and her own wits that she managed to escape her captors and flee Ottoman lands, arriving in America in 1917. In the U.S. her tragic story quickly turned her into a phenomenon and she became the central figure of the American relief campaign for Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire—the single largest humanitarian campaign in U.S. History, raising an equivalent today of half of a billion dollars. At the peak of her celebrity she had starred in a Hollywood film based on her own life and was admired by diplomats, politicians, industrialists, and journalists alongside tens of millions of ordinary Americans. But her improbable rise to fame had its darker side as well. When she agreed to come to Hollywood, she was 17 years old and had escaped the genocide less than a year before. Naïve and inexperienced, she was confronted by the selfish greed of Hollywood, where those who were meant to be her guardians were only too willing to exploit her and defraud her of her earnings. She was forced to struggle against corruption, and manipulation—all while dealing with her own trauma and survivor's guilt as she attempted to help other refugees.

Director's statement

The Armenian genocide is the enduring pain of my nation. It is my family's pain, and it is my own pain. Though I always wanted to, I was wary of making a film about it. I was afraid to be overly sentimental, overly emotional. I was afraid of telling stories that only confirmed Armenians as a nation of victims with no historical agency and nothing but tragedy running through our veins. That is, until I stumbled upon an interview with Aurora Mardiganian while going through the Zoryan Genocide Institute archives. Like most of the other Zoryan testimonies do, the interview begins with a middle-aged man in the apartment of an elderly genocide survivor. Slowly and gently the interviewer starts to ask questions about the survivor's past. But Aurora's replies are strange: she talks about the genocide, but also about her time as an actress. At first, the interviewer seems confused, perhaps Aurora is senile? But when she takes out a large and yellowing poster from 1919, with a young Armenian woman in the center, everything clicks into place. She was indeed a movie star. I was as stunned as the interviewer. This genocide survivor was once a major celebrity? How come I have never heard of her? How can it be that nobody has heard of her? As I kept watching her interview other emotions started to overcome me. As she spoke it seemed to me as if she grew younger and younger. Even though her story was painful to hear, an incredible but also ordinary heroism shone through. This woman refused to be reduced to a victim. She refused to be reduced to an object of history. I knew then that I would make my film about the genocide.

Biography director

Inna Sahakyan graduated from the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia with an M.A. degree in Fine Arts Criticism. Inna has more than 15 years of experience in film-industry in Armenia. Since 2003 she has been working as a producer and director at Bars Media Documentary Film Studio. The Last Tightrope Dancer in Armenia is an award-winning documentary that Inna Sahakyan has co-directed with Arman Yeritsyan. The film was translated into 10 languages and awarded in several film festivals such as Golden Apricot (Armenia) as The Best Armenian Film Award, Dance on Camera (New York) as The Best Documentary, Grand prix at the 19th International Festival of Ethnological Film (Belgrade, Serbia, 2010), etc. She has also produced the studio's feature documentaries *Donkeymentary* and *One, Two, Three*. Inna is currently working on several documentary projects, including a documentary-animation film *Aurora's Sunrise* (Armenian-German co-production), a feature-length documentary *Mel* (Armenia-The Netherlands co-production) and is developing new creative documentary projects.

Biography producer

Vardan Hovhannisyan was a freelance cameraman and covering the hot regions and ethnic conflicts related to the post-Soviet transition for the international news from 1988 to 1991. In 1993 he established Bars Media Documentary Film Studio, one of the first independent film companies in Armenia. His film *A Story of People in War and Peace* (an International Co-production with BBC, ITVS/PBS, ARTE, WDR, YLE) is a powerful, personal understanding of the human costs of war. The film has won over 20 awards including the FIPRESCI prize, the Best Documentary Filmmaker Award at Tribeca Film Festival. In 2010, Vardan produced the documentary *The Last Tightrope Dancer in Armenia*, an international co-production with NHK, ITVS, YLE, SVT and TVP. He is currently developing *Aurora's Sunrise*, a documentary film project, as well as producing several documentary TV programs.

Company profile

Bars Media Documentary Film Studio was established in 1993 by Vardan Hovhannisyan, who began his career as a frontline filmmaker covering hotspots in the former Soviet Union. The studio's first documentary, *A Story of People in War and Peace* (2006) has won over 20 awards including the FIPRESCI prize, the Best Documentary Filmmaker Award at Tribeca Film Festival, the Audience Award at Trieste Film Festival, the Special Mention Award at the ZagrebDox Film Festival and Docaviv Film Festival. Other award-winning documentaries are *Donkeymentary* (2012) shown on ARTE, *One, Two, Three* (2015, Armenian/German/Norwegian co-production) that premiered at GAIFF and won Best Armenian Documentary Film Award. In collaboration with Public TV of Armenia, the studio has produced the documentary series *Mysteries of Armenia* (2013-2015), *My Army* (2016), *The Road* (2017) and *The Road: Chasing a Dream* (2018). Bars Media is also currently developing documentaries in different countries around the world.

Dirty Girls

Fiction

DIRECTOR

Olga Malea

PRODUCERS

Effie Skrobola, Costas Labropoulos

PRODUCTION COMPANY

View Master Films

APPROX. BUDGET OF THE FILM

1.000.000,00 EUR

FINANCING IN PLACE

70.000,00 EUR

CONTACT

View Master Films

23-25 Vrilissou str 11476

Athens, Greece

tel.+30 210 64 127 00

info@viewmasterfilms.gr

www.viewmasterfilms.gr

Synopsis

Dirty Girls takes place in Greece but is spoken in English. It is a comedy about two 59-year old women —a doctor and a history professor— robbing a bank at a remote Greek island in order to have a chance to change their lives. As the two protagonists struggle to get their money out of the island, they subvert clichés about women ageing and succeed in changing their lives, although not in the way they were planning to. A funny, feminist movie hopping to become a landmark, like *Thelma and Louise* a couple of decades ago.

Director's statement

Two strong female characters, a wild and beautiful landscape, and an original plot are the main ingredients of *Dirty Girls*. Two well-known actresses (British, German or French) would be the ideal cast. They will portray two professional women who get to Greece for a weekend and end up robbing a bank. *Dirty Girls* is a comedy about two professional women who, hitting 60, rob a bank, trying to face retirement and their need to get out of their marriages and start a new life. In a society that tells them that they are old and redundant, *Dirty Girls* prove otherwise. As we seldom see movies with 60-year old women as protagonists, *Dirty Girls* is unique in this aspect. Our protagonists land on a remote Greek island, filled with refugees. Their only scope is to rob the bank, take the money and leave. However, as they have great difficulties getting the money out of the island, they get are more and more involved with issues of the refugees. Also, like the refugees, our protagonists lose everything: houses,

jobs, marriages, friends. In the end however, they do succeed getting on their feet again and starting a new life at age 60. *Dirty Girls* is a fun and feel-good movie but it is also unique and original. The comic elements arise from realistic situations and from our female characters who are real and complex. If the protagonists were men, this would have been a completely different movie. *Dirty Girls* is gendered, original and funny.

Biography director

Olga Malea (b.1960) is one of the most well-known Greek directors, member of the European Film Academy since 2000 and of EWA since 2017. She has written and directed six features, most of which became big box office hits in Greece, like the *The Cow's Orgasm*, *Risotto* and *Little Greek Godfather*. Her features have also screened at International Film Festivals such as these of Karlovy Vary, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Seattle, New York, Sao Paulo, Torino, Rome, Cairo, London, and several others. Olga Malea has also directed two very successful TV series (40 episodes each), titled *Litsa.com* and *Dreamcatcher*, which attracted more than 20% of the audience share. They both aired at Antenna TV, one of the most highly ranked TV channels in Greece. She is now developing a 7-episode TV series titled *The Making of Maria*, about young Maria Callas. She is also developing three features, *Dirty Girls*, *Zorbina*, the story of a female Zorba and *Unbroken Love*, drama.

Biography producer

Following her film studies in Canada at Université de Montréal in Quebec, **Effie Skrobola** moved to Greece in 2005 and started working as an associate producer for producer Costas Labropoulos. Since 2010, she is working as creative producer at View Master Films. Currently she is overseeing the development of all the company's co-production projects. She has completed the MBS Course in Marketing and Distribution, the Maia Workshop Training Programme for Producers and the Sources 2 Projects and Process- Training the Mentors workshop.

Company profile

View Master Films, located in Athens, is an independent film and event production company established in 2010, by George Kyriakos --a qualified film production manager, with over 25 years of experience in the audio-visual field. George Kyriakos is also member of the European Film Academy. The company has joined forces with producer Costas Labropoulos, one of the top professionals in the audiovisual field, collaborator of Theo Angelopoulos, Costa Gavras and Martin Scorsese. Their aim is to produce and co-produce original and interesting content for the cinema and television. Effie Skrobola is collaborating with Costas since 2010 as a Creative Producer supervising all the company's co-production projects. View Master Films is one of the leading production companies in Greece. It has seen success through dedication and an unrivalled determination to leave a mark in the entertainment industry.

How is Katia?

Fiction

DIRECTOR	Christina Tynkevych
PRODUCERS	Alla Belaya, Dmytro Sukhanov, Veronika Stepanchuk
PRODUCTION COMPANY	Toy Cinema
APPROX. BUDGET OF THE FILM	300.000,00 EUR
FINANCING IN PLACE	20.000,00 EUR
CONTACT	Toy Cinema 44-45, Artema str.84a 04050 Kiev, Ukraine tel. +38 063 47 87 328 producer@toycinema.com.ua www.toycinema.com.ua

Synopsis

Anna, a 35-year-old ambulance doctor, lives in Kiev with her 10-year old daughter Katia and her mother Olga. They live a modest Kiev life. Olga, a retired school teacher, helps Anna raise Katia, while Anna provides for the family. One day everything seems to be the usual routine but early in the morning Anna receives a call: her daughter has been hit by a car. Behind the wheel was Marina, an 18-year-old law student from a wealthy family. Marina was racing her friends after a night of partying, when she got distracted and did not see the girl. Katia is not killed but ends up in coma. Marina's father is an influential media mogul with the right connections, so they quickly offer a money reward to Anna and her family. Anna refuses, she wants to proceed to court. Anna's friends attempt to comfort her through the whole process: among them is Sergei, Anna's married colleague. He quickly becomes Anna's closest confidante. While everyone around Anna thinks it's hopeless to fight against Marina, Marina has a fight of her own. The guilt is eating her from the inside out, but her family and friends are not taking her seriously with her father taking the strongest stand at trying to get Marina out of trouble. Eventually Marina is plead not guilty. In the meantime, Anna's mother Olga takes the money from marina's family for her medical treatment. Having reached her personal low, Anna seeks relief in a relationship with Sergei. Married Sergei, however, sees it as a mistake and distances himself from Anna. The anger, helplessness and hatred within Anna slowly destroy her from within. Marina seeks redemption, while Anna - revenge. Marina is invited to the celebration of her dad's wedding anniversary, where his wife Svitlana announces her pregnancy. Later at the party, Marina sees her boyfriend making out and having an affair with Svitlana. This drives Marina out of the celebration and she spends a night drinking with strangers. Coming back to her dad's house, she finds drugs in her room and ends up in an overdose. Unknowingly Anna arrives at a call to Marina's house. Now Marina's life depends on Anna and Anna considers the worst...Though last minute, she pulls herself together and makes an injection saving the girl. When after her night shift, Anna comes to visit Katia at the hospital, her state seems the same. When suddenly, Anna hears a breath in.

Director's statement

As Solzhenitsyn said: "The battle line between good and evil runs through the heart of every man." This "battle line" is my main point of interest. When everything is fine and our life is on track, the line between right and wrong seems to be set in stone. However, once the situation changes and our comfortable world falls apart, we start acting differently. So what does it take to remove the mask of a civilized human being? The moral stretch does not happen overnight. It starts with small things. We push the line just a little a bit at first: with a small bribe, a small lie, a small negligence, until the point when murder for justice does not seem so outrageous anymore. Both protagonists, Anna and Marina, have the right moral instincts, but they exist in a society which constantly teaches them against these instincts. Marina, feeling guilty about what she's done, is, however, not ready to take the responsibility for it, knowing how easy it is for her to get away with the crime. Anna, an idealist in heart, initially leads a passive war against the cynicism of those around her but the illness of her daughter and the impossibility to find justice crack her shell. Anna allows herself to push the 'line' a tiny bit every now and then, while the corrupted environment she exists in only encourages this downhill. And when the point of no return is almost reached, Anna manages to find her way back and provide a saving hand to Marina. Because every Anna has a Marina in it, and every Marina - an Anna. And, maybe, when it comes to morality, the "grey zone" is all there is.

Biography director

Christina Tynkevych grew up in Kiev, Ukraine. At the age of 19 she moved to London where she studied film at the University of Arts and the University of Westminster. While working on her first short documentary *Kraina*, she collaborated closely with Joram ten Brink, a documentary director and the producer of the Oscar-nominated film *The Act of Killing*. *Kraina* was eventually long-listed for the Oscars 2017. Her next short film *Solatium* was also filmed in Ukraine. The premiere took place in April 2017 and went on to screen at festivals both in Europe and America, while also having been short-listed for the Ukrainian Film Academy awards. Christina has lived and worked in London, Paris and now settled in her native Kiev. At the moment she is developing her debut feature as part of the Midpoint Feature Launch Programme.

Biography producer

Veronika Stepanchuk grew up in Zhytomyr, Ukraine and pursued her BA in Film Production at Kiev National University of Culture and Arts. After her BA she has spent a year living in the US, where she completed a filmmaking course at Houston University. Later she has joined Toy Cinema and has since worked on numerous productions as production manager and coordinator. In 2018 she has produced her first feature doc, while *How is Katia* would be her debut feature drama. At the moment she is in the process of finishing her MA degree in Feature Film Production with a specialization in European coproduction and film financing.

Company profile

In 2003 Dmitry Sukhanov has found Toy Pictures, which specialized in commercial and service projects. It has quickly grown and become a prominent company in the Ukrainian market. Soon, Dmitry felt that the company is ready to expand and in 2012 together with Alla Belaya they have created a new division - **Toy Cinema**, specializing only in film production. Dmitry's background of servicing the productions for big international clients and Alla's previous experience in international film co-productions (Under The Electric Sky by German Jr., House with a Turret by Neimann etc.) turned out to be the perfect combo. The company's main focus is split between supporting the new generation of Ukrainian auteur filmmakers and bringing quality international co-productions to Ukraine.

Melissa's Story

Documentary

DIRECTORS

Asia Dér, Sára Haragonics

PRODUCERS

Sára László, Marcell Gerő, Noémi Veronika Szakonyi

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Campfilm

APPROX. BUDGET OF THE FILM

88.409,00 EUR

FINANCING IN PLACE

5.015,00 EUR

CONTACT

Campfilm

Károly krt. 3/c

H-1075 Budapest,

tel. (+36) 20 260 2606

office@campfilm.eu

www.campfilm.eu

Synopsis

Virág is a former liberal politician, who gets sick and tired of the anti-democratic Hungarian parliament and - in her own "midlife-crisis" -, decides to rather focus on changes in her own life. After being a rebellious green party member of the Parliament, living a vibrant yet lonely activist life in the city of Budapest, she fell in love with another woman, Nora, moved to the countryside with her and changed her career to be a senior campaigner at Green Peace. Nora is a singer and guitarist in a band. She used to work as a videographer for years at a Hungarian left-wing news site. She is committed to human rights and actively takes part in Civil Rights movements. They unofficially got married and -as the prevailing Hungarian laws forbid gay couples to adopt a child-, they both signed up for adoption as single parents. The film follows Virág (41) and Nóra (37) throughout the intense period of waiting for adoption and the struggles of forming a family with Melissa, their adopted daughter in a small Eastern European country. As they are raising an adopted Roma girl as a gay couple they find themselves in an extreme situation in the middle of three target groups of daily prejudices in a country where the Government builds its power with creating hatred towards minorities. The pressure of the radicalising Hungarian political climate leads to a compromise that they decide to leave their country.

Dvor is surrounded by a big evergreen forest, making nature and weather a dominant element that defines the place. Uninhabited wooden houses are scattered along the hills. Rivers are see-through clean, fast and full of small cascades. Woods are dark green, hidden with fog, frighteningly quiet and still, especially during winter when snow, rain, fog and storms prevail. Short cuts to exterior shoots will separate the segments from the car, juxtaposing two spaces - indoor and outdoor, intimate and public one aiding to the conflict of transience and eternity.

Director's statement

The story unfolds in several layers. The present appears in observational, cinematic style. Alternating with these situative scenes the film is structured by the narration of a tale. Taking the advice of their psychologist, Virág and Nóra began writing their story to help integrating their two and a half years old daughter into their family. They call it a tale, because the text is meant to be read like a bedtime story to Melissa. The tale provides an opportunity to create a lyrical reality in the film, while it also introduces a narrative thread, which, as soon as Melissa arrives, turns from past into present tense. It becomes an explanation of the surrounding world of their daughter, so she will be able to understand once she is a grown up why her parents decided to leave Hungary. While they are writing the tale they are discussing their environment from a very personal perspective. Throughout the film there is a constant layer of infiltrating politics: through TV and Radio news, or the propaganda billboards set by the government the current political climate appears in the intimate atmosphere of their daily life. This political subtext has a deep effect on the plot of the personal story. Through archive footages of protests and speeches in the Parliament, the film reflects on Virág's rebellious past. The fact that Nóra has a band enables us to use any of their recordings as the soundtrack of the movie. This music can appear in a natural way, closely belonging to the scene and state of mind. The film is structured by three chapters. The first part is the stressful waiting for the adoption, when it's only the two of them, the second is about becoming a family with Melissa and the third part is the dilemma of leaving Hungary - and the moving itself.

Biography directors

Asia Dér is a freelance documentary director. She was born in Bratislava but grew up in Budapest. After receiving her MA degree in Aesthetics, Asia studied documentary direction at DOCnomads which is a joint master studies of the Budapest, Lisbon and Brussels Filmschool. Currently she is pursuing her PhD at the University of theatre and Film Arts Budapest. Her films were screened at festivals in France, Brazil and the Czech Republic. *Letters from Mom* and *Burdened* by the past were nominated for the best documentary prize in the Hungarian Film Week. She is a member of Docnomads' Alumni Association and a chair member of Match Frame Productions, a young documentary production company, whose aim is to promote and support documentary filmmaking in Eastern Europe.

Sára Haragonics has graduated at University of Theatre and Film Arts, Budapest in 2015 with an MA in documentary film directing. She received her BA in Media Production in the United Kingdom. For the last ten years she has been working as a director and editor of short films and documentaries. Many of her work has been selected at festivals (CEU20, The Station, Laura Lackey, Once upon a time in Hungary), or won prizes (Coming Face to Face - Verzio International Documentary Festival). She is now co-directing her first feature - length documentary *Melissa's Story* and has started developing her personal documentary, *Hi Sari!*

Biography producer

Sára László graduated at the film director's faculty of the University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest, Hungary and also completed a one-year production training in the Parisian film school ESRA. During her internship at the film production company Les Films du Poisson based in Paris, she participated, among others, in the development and production of creative documentaries by Flavia Castro, Catherine Bernstein and Patricio Guzmán. After returning to Hungary she co-founded Campfilm in 2007 and worked as a producer or occasionally as a co-author in all of Campfilm's completed films. In the recent years she worked together with various national and international partners (Media council Hungary, Hungarian National Film Fund, HBO Europe, ARTE France, RTS, Jba Production (FR), Novak Prod (BE), What's up Films (FR) etc). With Campfilm's projects she participated in several international training programs (Ex Oriente Film, Eurodoc, Nipkow Programme, EAVE). She's currently a post doctorate student at the University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest. She is a member of the European Documentary Network (EDN).

Company profile

Founded by producer Sára László, director-producer Marcell Gerő and DoP Tamás Dobos **Campfilm** during its first 8 years mainly produced documentaries with various national and international partners. The company aims to keep its identity established through the films produced and by continuing to work on documentaries while enlarging its experience by in parallel starting the production of feature films. The films produced by Campfilm address social issues and have a strong cinematic quality. The works completed so far have participated and gained recognition at both national and international festivals, such as the 45th Directors' Fortnight in Cannes, the 43rd IFF Rotterdam, the 21st Sarajevo Film Festival or the 62nd San Sebastian IFF. Since 2012 the films produced by Campfilm have received repeatedly the most prominent recognition awarded by the Hungarian Film Critics' Association: *Caught Between Two Worlds* - "Best Hungarian documentary of 2011", *Another Hungary* - "Best Hungarian documentary of 2013", *Soft Rain* - "Best Hungarian short film of 2013", *Cain's Children* - "Best Hungarian documentary of 2014".

Snow and the Bear

Fiction

WRITER & DIRECTOR

PRODUCER

PRODUCTION COMPANY

APPROX. BUDGET OF THE FILM

FINANCING IN PLACE

CONTACT

Selcen Ergun

Nefes Polat

Nefes Films

796.706,00 EUR

276.650,00 EUR

Nefes Films

Firuzaga mah. Set sk.

1/4 Beyoğlu, Istanbul, Turkey

tel.+90 530 459 63 86

nefespolat@gmail.com

nefesfilms.com

Synopsis

A small, snow-covered, northeastern border town of Turkey. Winter has always been tough here, but this year it doesn't come to an end – almost in a kind of surreal way. The rumor has it that bears have risen early from winter-sleep and killed some animals around. Although nobody has really seen them, people are afraid that they will come to the town soon. Asli is a young nurse who has appointed here recently for her compulsory service. One late night, on the road returning to her residence, Asli has a quarrel with Hasan, a man from the town. Inebriated, Hasan gets frustrated, grabs her arm. With panic, Asli pushes him away in the small snow-covered alley and runs home without looking back. The next day, she is anxious with the anticipation that Hasan will come back any time and cause trouble. However, she finds out that he hasn't gone back home at all. He has gone missing. In this small town the sudden disappearance of a man creates all sorts of rumors. While Asli gets increasingly entrapped in this place where she'd planned to stay only temporarily, the gendarme interrogates Samet – a young man who has had some troubles with Hasan in the past – as a suspect. Asli testifies that she saw Samet going home the night that Hasan disappeared and saves him from unlawful imprisonment. However, the suspicion about Samet has already started to spread in the town. Step by step, Asli and Samet start to share an unspoken secret. Samet knows that Asli is the one who accidentally caused Hasan's death. Hiding this from the villagers and even from Asli, he starts to see himself in the position of protecting her and being her guardian. However, the only thing Asli wants is to get away from this place where the border between good and evil is rapidly evaporating. Samet gets infuriated by the fact that Asli refuses him and his native town. While they have a quarrel, a gunshot is heard from

outside. They go out to see what has happened: amidst the angry crowd, a bear lies dead on the snow – killed by the villagers. Hasan's corpse has been discovered in the forest. Although in a way everybody has a contribution to what happened to him – and the main person responsible is Asli – it is easier for the villagers to believe the prediction that bears would hurt someone has come true as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The bear becomes the bearer of all sins.

Director's statement

Snow and the Bear is the story of a young woman's encounter with the unknown, doubt and guilt. It is the story of a small snow-covered town getting increasingly cut off from the world by a harsh winter, which doesn't come to an end – almost in a kind of surreal way. It is also the story of the manhood, who turns everything into an issue of masculinity, an issue of power struggle. Setting all these in the cold counter-fairy tale atmosphere of an isolating, overwhelming winter, I am interested in exploring the limits that one would force, when looking for a way out of entrapment. In my homeland, on a very daily basis, I have been feeling increasingly confined and oppressed in many areas of life. I am not alone in the way I feel. Struggling with an uncontrolled power has become a part of the daily life of our generation in Turkey, mainly in the last few years after the Gezi protests. At the same time, we are getting more and more isolated from the rest of the world by the politics of the government. As a young woman living in a country that is becoming more conservative every day, I find myself in the very centre of this confinement. On the other hand, when I confront this struggle, I also realize that I am stronger than I thought before. In *Snow and the Bear*, I want to explore all these feelings of fear, confinement, struggle and hope - which many people consistently face in various places on earth to different extents - in a small isolated town where they become more tangible. In this microcosm, intertwined relationships and power struggles come into light easier than usual. I also feel stronger now as a young filmmaker in these circumstances, since all these struggles make me more passionate about telling the stories from my part of the world. I want to make this film to understand what is happening in my part of the world and so in the world in general. Establishing a small town getting increasingly cut off from the world by a non-ending winter as its setting. *Snow and the Bear* features the story of a female protagonist, named Asli, a young nurse who has appointed here recently. She comes from a middle-class family and from a place where life and nature is softer. She is a stranger in this landscape where the cold surrounds her and nature rules. However, from the beginning, we understand that she isn't this typical outsider woman coming to a strange small town to be a victim. When she gets increasingly entrapped not only by the endless winter and blocked roads, but also by her oscillation between guilt and search for hope; she finds herself in a crash-course of discovering her side that is as tough as the winter here.

Biography director

Selcen Ergun is a film director, screenwriter and photographer from Istanbul, Turkey. After studying Industrial Design and Visual Culture at Middle East Technical University, she obtained her MA in Screenwriting and Directing at Istanbul Bilgi University. She is a Berlinale Talents 2018 alumna. She began her career as an assistant director, worked in many national and international productions including two feature films of Reha Erdem: *My Only Sunshine* and *Kosmos*. She directed short films, commercials and music videos. Her short films *Confrontation* and *A Sunny Day* have been screened and awarded prizes at many national

and international film festivals Selcen continues to work as a music and commercial video director, and is currently developing her debut feature film *Snow and the Bear*, which received production funding from the Turkish Ministry of Culture. The film project won Best Project Award at Meetings on the Bridge Platform of Istanbul International Film Festival. It has been selected for Berlinale Talents Script Station 2018 and First Films First, Goethe- Institut Young Directors' Academy South-Eastern Europe.

Biography producer

Nefes Polat has a degree in film making and produced an MA project at London Film School in 2012. She was personal assistant to producer during the shooting of *Winter Sleep* by Nuri Bilge Ceylan. She was project manager for Zeynofilm and Yapımlab from 2013 to 2015. Also she was the assistant director of the first edition of Antalya Film Forum Co-production and Development Platform in Turkey. From 2015 to 2018, she worked as the head of production for Mars Production. Nefes Polat is a Berlinale Talents and Talents Sarajevo alumna, received VFF Berlinale Talent Highlight Award in 2017 with the project *The Bus to Amerika* by Derya Durm.

Company profile

Nefes Films based in Istanbul, is an independent film production company. It's mainly focusing on developing and producing films which have potential for international audience. Concentrating on co-production since 2012, the founder of the company, Nefes Polat has been producing films which have been pre-sold in Europe and won success in film festivals. The company's recent credits are *Penny Bank* by Ferit Karol and *Snow and the Bear* by Selcen Ergun that already granted by national authorities during their development processes.

The Myth of a Real Man

Fiction

DIRECTOR

Milica Lee Filipovski

PRODUCER

Adi Dizdarević

PRODUCTION COMPANY

DART Film

APPROX. BUDGET OF THE FILM

826.670,00 EUR

FINANCING IN PLACE

31.670,00 EUR

CONTACT

DART Film

Niška 6, 11000

Belgrade, Serbia

tel. 011 420 32 78

www.dartfilm.com

office@dartfilm.com

Synopsis

Vasiliye and Katarina Ostrogorsky, a couple in their late thirties, have decided to emigrate to Canada. Life in their small Serbian spa town, staying in an apartment with Vasiliye's parents, seems to be without any prospects. It doesn't help that Vasiliye is a vocal opponent of the ruling political regime, hindering any hopes of advancing his teaching career at the university. While they wait for a response from the Canadian embassy on the status of their visa, their country comes under attack during the 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia. The couple's son Đordje (12) now watches his father as he puts on a uniform and answers the inevitable call to mobilization to defend a country which he was initially hoping to leave. Not answering the call could land him in jail. Also, Vasiliye doesn't want to be like one of the sons of the people from the ruling party, who send other people's children to war, but keep their own at home. It doesn't help that his father, a staunch traditionalist, has a firm grip on his son, even to this day. According to him, it is a man's duty to fight when called, and that's that. While Vasiliye's absence creates tension in the family, their town seems to be off the map of the intensifying conflict. Life goes on as usual, save for the air-raid sirens howling every night. Townspeople are more worried that their favorite Mexican soap opera has been cancelled. Katarina remains hopeful that their visas will arrive. She doesn't know that they arrived months ago and were kept hidden by Vasiliye's mother. Đordje, who found out about this before Katarina, kept quiet - he didn't want to go to Canada. But when news of the death of a soldier from their town reaches them, Đordje reveals the secret. The grandmother's defense: people come back from the war, but no one comes back from Canada. When Vasiliye returns on a day's leave from the military, he is presented with the visas. Katarina is determined to leave immediately. Instead

of taking the chance to escape as he knows that the military police would be right after them, Vasiliye chooses to return to the army. He leaves behind a distraught wife, with the promise that staying, for now, is the smartest decision. Faced with the gravity of his actions, Vasiliye receives news that his home town is the target of a heavy-air raid. There is a rumor that a high-ranking general had been hiding in the old spa hotels during the bombing, making this quiet, picturesque town a direct target. Walking through his demolished town, Vasiliye's only hope is that his wife didn't listen. That she took the kids and left without him. Through the smoke, it's as if he can see them... standing by the Niagara Falls. a vow that their cry will, somehow, be heard.

Director's statement

The project is based on my own memories of growing up in Yugoslavia in the 1990s and subsequently emigrating to Canada. We realized that normal life in our country was no longer a viable possibility. The decision to leave can be a battleground of the rational and emotional sides within a person. The dilemmas that many people face today are not much different from those of the protagonists - stay and fight, or leave. While we hear the stories of refugees fleeing, it is the moments before they embark on their journeys that interest me. Twenty years on, we can see the state of our world and country more clearly, precisely through those stories. I believe that a good drama must contain comedy, since a good comedy must be a drama at its core. While this film deals with the effects of war on ordinary people, I try to approach it with that humor which humans have always used to deal with unbearable moments. Grey, rainy March weather will set the tone of the film. I imagine lots of natural light which pushes through the fog that settles in early spring. The camera movement will be controlled, and, to paraphrase Kiarostami, I will strive for every frame to be a painting in itself. I have been collecting visual inspiration from a wide range of painters - from Leonora Carrington's surreal, green-tinged interiors to the figures of Balthus. A film that inspired me is Andrei Konchalovsky's *SIBERIADE* (1979) through its overlapping of realism and surrealism to create a visceral experience. By setting the film in my home town, a spa in southern Serbia, I am exploring characters who define much of what I am interested in today. I feel that their lives, in all their absurdities, are worthy of sharing with the world. Our town was destined to be one of the great spa towns of Europe, and it probably would have been, if it had not been located in a country which faces a war every fifty years or so. This is what defines my characters: endless potential taken away by destruction, both from the people around them and by outside forces.

Biography director

Born in Nis, Serbia in 1989, **Milica Lee Filipovski** received her BFA in Film Directing from School of the Image Arts (Ryerson University) and a certificate from FAMU in Prague. She received her master's degree from the Faculty of Performing Arts in Belgrade. In 2018, she became a member of the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television. Her short film *Fluffy* (2016) premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and screened at over 30 film festivals, including Telluride, Aspen and SIFF. It won numerous awards, including the Best Short Film Award by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association/Golden Globes and the Canadian Screen Award for Best Live Action Short in 2018. Lee was one of the participants in the Nuits en Or tour by the Cesar Awards in 2018. Her first feature project, *The Myth of a real Man*, currently in development.

Biography producer

Adi Dizdarević was born in 1983 in Belgrade, Serbia. He grew up between Belgrade, Sarajevo and Paris. In 2007 he enrolls in the Production Department of EICAR (International Film School of Paris) for one year and then returns to Belgrade to graduate from the Academy of Arts in 2016. He participated in Sarajevo Talent Campus 2016, Midpoint Feature Lab 2018 and selected for Rotterdam Film lab in 2019. In addition to freelancing he works with DART film, a production company based in Belgrade, Serbia, where he works as a producer and production manager. Beside working in Serbian film industry, he also worked with production service companies Work in Progress, Archangel Production and RED production. In 2019 he founds a production company Filmbakery with director colleague Lee Filipovski. The experience he gained working in various positions provided him with an in-depth understanding of production mechanism and awakened a wish to produce projects independently.

Company profile

Dart Film is a film production house founded in 2006 by Vladimir Vidić and Nataša Damjanović.

Dart Film currently focuses on working with emerging talented filmmakers from the younger generation with the hope of establishing a new creative wave in the regional film industry. So far, the company's productions have screened at some of the leading festivals and include *All Alone* by Bobo Jelčić (Sarajevo IFF 2018), *Humidity* by Nikola Ljuca (Berlinale Forum 2016, Acid Cannes 2017) as well as Dane Komljen's feature *All the Cities of the North* (Locarno, Rotterdam, New York FF 2016) and his short film *Our Body* (nominated for Best Short Film at the 2015 European Film Awards). Dart Film has also served as the associate producer *The Loan* by Ognjen Glavonić (Cannes Directors' Fortnight 2018) and co-produced *I was Home, but...* (Berlinale Competition 2019).