

WIP F The Pencil



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Russia

GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME: Drama | Digital Format | Russian | 90 mins

DIRECTOR:

Natalya NAZAROVA

PRODUCER:

Anastasia LUKOVNIKOVA

WIP GOALS:

Funds, Sales agents, Pre-sales

PRODUCTION BUDGET:

US\$ 600,000

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

2012 *The Daughter*

ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

After her husband is arrested, Antonina follows him to the northern province of Russia, where her urge to bring change leads to a conflict with a local gang leader.

SYNOPSIS

Antonina, an artist from Saint Petersburg, has spent her life in the shadows of her husband Sergey, a star of the city's art underground and a leader of the opposition. Their marriage was all but dead, as Antonina couldn't compete with his many luminous lovers. But when Sergey is put in jail for his political activities, Antonina realizes that now she can prove she is worth something. She leaves her comfortable life and follows him to a far-away settlement in the taiga. Sergey asks her to go back: her sacrifice is not appreciated and he never loved her. But Antonina won't quit. She finds a job as an art teacher at a local school. Almost the entire population works either in prison or at the pencil factory.

Antonina decides to teach her students with this simple and primitive tool, the pencil. Antonina is determined to lift the spirit of the downtrodden children in her class. However, she quickly discovers that the power in the school belongs to a twelve-year-old boy Misha, whose brother is a feared local gang leader. Despite the warnings, Antonina stands up to the boy who bullies and tortures his classmates and the teachers.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I believe that the role of a teacher in a person's life is enormous: a timely encounter with the right person can turn someone's life around, form their personality, and open new doors. Teachers, however, hardly ever get to see the results of their own work. I teach acting myself, and know the joys and troubles of the profession from the inside. It was the unseen drama of the teacher's job that served as an impetus for writing this script.

The pencil in this movie is an image and a symbol. The people's lives, seemingly identical, resemble the pencils on the conveyor belt. Antonina has to become part of that 'simple personal world'. But the folk are not as simple as one might imagine, and do not look forward to being enlightened. What is it then that will awaken those people from their hibernation and inspire them to seek something other than just a warm apartment with a heater and a TV set? Antonina dies defending her students, fighting alone against the force that paralysed the society. Yet, that she did was not in vain. Some of her students break away from this environment and continue to study.

DIRECTOR

Natalya NAZAROVA

Award-winning Russian screenwriter and director, author of numerous TV series and several successful feature films for new wave of Russian modern cinema directors, including *Mermaid* (dir. Anna Melikyan, 2007) and *Betrayal* (dir. Kirill Serebrennikov, 2012). Her feature debut as a director, *The Daughter* (2012), won the FIPRESCI Award at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival and Warsaw International Film Festival, Best Debut Award at the major national festival Kinotavr, and was selected for festivals in Honfleur (France), Cottbus (Germany), Gothenburg (Sweden), Palm Springs (USA), San Francisco (USA), Brussels (Belgium) and many others.

PRODUCER

Anastasia LUKOVNIKOVA

Born in Moscow, Anastasia read political science at university and then studied screenwriting and directing at a renowned Russian film school. She has over five years' experience as a producer and assistant producer, helping bring to life international projects exploring the richness of the world and its people. Her credits include a documentary with the most successful crowdfunding campaign in Russia *Happy people. Altai* (2016), a Brazilian music documentary *Danado de Bom* (2015) and the first Russian-Brazilian co-production, *Russian Red* (2016).

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Salt Studio

Salt Studio is a Moscow-based production company founded by Denis Kovalevskiy in 2010. Salt Studio is known for its successful partnership with the new generation of Russian independent directors and its genre works for a wide audience. *Betrayal* (2012), the studio's collaboration with Kirill Serebrennikov, was selected for the main competition of the Venice Film Festival in 2012. *Salvation* (2015), directed by Ivan Vyrypaev, was screened at major Russian film festivals in Sochi and Sakhalin in 2015. Other titles include the drama *72 hours* (2015), as well as comedies *Summer Holidays* (2013) and *S.O.S Love!* (2012), coproduced with USA and Hungary.