

2019 CANNES FILM FESTIVAL



OFFICIAL SELECTION
UN CERTAIN REGARD
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

A FILM BY KANTEMIR BALAGOV

BEANPOLE

137MIN – RUSSIA – 2019 – 2:39.1 – 5.1

DIRECTOR: KANTEMIR BALAGOV

SCREENPLAY: KANTEMIR BALAGOV, ALEXANDER TEREKHOV

PRODUCERS: ALEXANDER RODNYANSKY, SERGEY MELKUMOV

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: KSENIA SEREDA

PRODUCTION DESIGNER: SERGEY IVANOV

COSTUME DESIGNER: OLGA SMIRNOVA

ORIGINAL MUSIC: EVGUENI GALPERINE

CAST: VIKTORIA MIROSHNICHENKO, VASILISA PERELYGINA,
ANDREY BYKOV, IGOR SHIROKOV, KONSTANTIN BALAKIREV,
KSENIA KUTEPOVA, OLGA DRAGUNOVA, TIMOFEY GLAZKOV

PRODUCTION: NON-STOP PRODUCTION, AR CONTENT

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SYNOPSIS

1945, Leningrad. World War II has devastated the city, demolishing its buildings and leaving its citizens in tatters, physically and mentally. Although the siege – one of the worst in history – is finally over, life and death continue their battle in the wreckage that remains. Two young women, Iya and Masha, search for meaning and hope in the struggle to rebuild their lives amongst the ruins.



KANTEMIR BALAGOV: A STATEMENT FROM THE DIRECTOR

Beanpole is my second feature film. It is very important to me that my story takes place in 1945. My heroes, like the city they live in, are mangled by a horrible war. They live in a city that has endured one of the worst sieges in the history of warfare. This is a story about them and about people they meet in Leningrad, the obstacles that they have to overcome and the way they are treated by society. They are psychologically crippled by the war and it will take time for them to learn to live their normal lives.

I am interested in the fates of women and especially women who fought in the Second World War. According to data, this was the war with the highest participation of women. As an author, I am interested in finding an answer to the question: what happens to a person who is supposed to give life after she passes through the trials of war?

The film has a particular colour palette. When I started to study the diaries of people who lived during that time, I learned that despite all the hardships and the devastation, they were surrounded by bright colours every day. This conflict between bright colours and the nature of post-war life is also very interesting to me.

The book "The Unwomanly Face of War" by the Nobel Laureate Svetlana Alexievich was my main inspiration for this film. This book opened a whole new world for me. I came to

realize how little I knew about the war and how little I knew about the role of women in the war. And this led me to another thought: what would happen to a woman after the war was over, when there was a tectonic shift in her mind and her nature, a violation of her nature that would obviously take place afterwards.

Leningrad was especially important for me as it was the city that survived this terrible siege, and the consequences of the siege played an important part in the film. It was vital for me to feel this space and background in the film, and you can feel it even now, in today's Leningrad (Saint Petersburg).

We feel the consequences of war in the space where the action takes place, and in the colour palette of the film. But most importantly it's in the fates of our heroes. It was important for me to show the consequences of war through people's faces, eyes, physiques, bodies, not just through abandoned or destroyed buildings.

On a surface level, *Beanpole* is a word that describes the physical attributes and outlook of our main hero, Iya, as she's a very tall woman. But for me *Beanpole* is more about clumsiness and this is how my heroes feel and express feelings in the film – they are clumsy, they are learning how to live again after the war and it is very difficult for them.



KANTEMIR BALAGOV: BIOGRAPHY

Kantermir Balagov was born in Nalchik, Russia, in 1991.

Beanpole marks his second feature film, Balagov having made his directorial debut with *Closeness* (2017), which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in Un Certain Regard and was awarded the FIPRESCI prize.

Balagov graduated from Alexander Sokurov's directing workshop at Kabardino-Balkarian State University in 2015. During his studies, he made a number of fiction and documentary films which took part in various domestic and international events.

Beanpole (2019) has been selected for the 72nd Annual Cannes Film Festival, in Un Certain Regard.

ALEXANDER RODNYANSKY: A STATEMENT FROM THE PRODUCER

Beanpole is an original story written by Kantemir Balagov and inspired by Svetlana Alexievich's book "The Unwomanly Face of War". *Beanpole* talks about war as a personal tragedy; this is a story of post-traumatic stress. We have seen similar films but almost all of them are stories of men whose lives were crippled by war, who come back to their normal lives and try to find their place in the world. *Beanpole* looks at the post-war world through women's eyes.

The story is based around the lives of two young women who had their whole lives ahead of them. A major focus in the film is their desire to reproduce. One of the film's primary heroes chooses birth as a kind of medicine for her trauma. She believes that if she gives birth, then this new person will be able to cure them both. I believe this is a very powerful creative decision that makes the story even more relevant today, to talk about the role of women in society. It allows us to retell a story about traditional PTSD in a more dramatic and radical way.

Out of this deep and intimate psychological drama grows a powerful metaphor about war: it never stops, even when the actual battles are over. Until a man or a woman finds the internal strength to rid himself or herself of war and of its memories, it will continue. The fact that we live in a world where wars still rage, makes *Beanpole* a very universal story.

As a true filmmaker, Kantemir tells a traditional story through powerful visual metaphors that create an intricate tapestry. He carefully chose the colour palette for his film, which sometimes tells us more about the internal struggles of his characters than the words could ever do. Two colours – green and ochre – dominate the film. We see them in costumes, in interior design, even in covering shots. These colours give us both drama and warmth. They speak to us both about intimacy and a conflict with the world to which our heroes have much trouble adapting.

Even though this is not a documentary, there is a natural authenticity to everything that we see and to all the actions our heroes make. Everything takes place in a carefully reconstructed world where every little detail – from interiors to everyday objects – is authentic to the time period. But attention to detail doesn't make *Beanpole* a period story. This is mostly because Kantemir chose young, unknown actors with modern faces for the leading roles. We never wanted our story to feel trapped in the past. This is not a story about a historic period: this is a story about the world today. This is why the ages of our heroes, the way they act in front of the camera, even their clothes (although authentic to the time period), look very modern and visually appropriate to contemporary filmmaking.

Kantemir has a huge advantage over some – if not most – contemporary directors: he combines true knowledge of classical cultural tradition with the fact he is a voice of his generation. Even though he knows and appreciates the filmmaking masterpieces of the past, he transforms them through his own unique experience and makes them part of his style and message which are very much contemporary and urgent. He is uncompromisingly visual. He doesn't want to confine himself to just the narrative; rather he strives to tell his story using every cinematic tool at his disposal.

I believe Kantemir's true strength comes from his realization of the drama and cruelty of life and his deep affection and empathy towards the people who are trying to survive and overcome terrible obstacles. He understands the problems that the world faces today and also – as someone who knows firsthand of the hardships and cruelty – he feels compassion to those who still suffer.



ALEXANDER RODNYANSKY: BIOGRAPHY

One of Russia's most prolific producers, Alexander Rodnyansky is the founder of AR Content, a Los Angeles based development and production banner designed to deliver premium quality content for film and television on an international scale. AR Content is a hub for filmmakers and screenwriters to develop their passion projects and partner with producers and distributors, in order to foster a cohesive creative vision.

In Cannes, AR Content will debut *Beanpole* from emerging Russian filmmaker Kantemir Balagov as part of the official festival line-up. Also in development are: Kevin Macdonald's Untitled World War II refugee documentary; the Ziad Doueiri-directed *Debriefing The President*; and Kornel Mondruzco's series "Everybody's Woman".

With over 30 television series and 40 feature films under his belt, including key works by some of the most renowned

filmmakers in Russian history, Rodnyansky continues to produce a blend of acclaimed Russian arthouse cinema and global blockbusters. Under his AR Films and Non-Stop Production banners, Rodnyansky is behind such renowned films as: Academy Award® nominee *Loveless*; Golden Globe® winner and Academy Award® nominee *Leviathan*; Venice Film Festival award winner *The Man Who Surprised Everyone*; Fedor Bondarchuk's Russian blockbuster *Stalingrad*; Academy Award® and Golden Globe® nominee *East/West*; and Nana Dzhordzhadze's Academy Award® nominee *A Chef in Love*.

American producing credits include: Robert Rodriguez' *Sin City: A Dame to Kill For*; Robert Rodriguez's *Machete Kills*, starring Danny Trejo and Mel Gibson; Warner Bros.' *Cloud Atlas* by Lana and Lilly Wachowski and Tom Tykwer; and *Jayne Mansfield's Car* with director Billy Bob Thornton.

FACTS ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

GENERAL:

- There is not a single image of Stalin, Lenin or any other traditional communist symbols of the time in the film.

STREETCARS AND EXTERIORS:

- The streetcars in *Beanpole* are authentic. They were a loan from the Museum of Electrical Transport in St. Petersburg. One of the challenges the crew encountered was constructing a special step outside of the streetcar – usually used by people without tickets who rode, just hanging on for dear life. Given it wasn't possible to do in a museum exhibit, production had to construct a special contraption that wouldn't damage the original step, but at the same time could support the weight of a dozen people.
- The car of the party official's son was also a loan from the museum. It was a 1938 Mercedes and the actor who played Sasha had to undergo a special training course to learn how to drive the car without any assistance.
- It took a lot of time to figure out the best texture for the streetcar scene, where the windows were supposed to be steamed up. Production did specific tests to figure out which technique gave the best result and during the shooting the crew came up with a specific technology for "guided texture".
- For the streetcar ride through the street, 600 meters of set was constructed.

THE APARTMENT:

- In the young women's apartment, the precise texture of an authentic, historical St. Petersburg's flat of that time was recreated. Every wall was covered by up to five layers of different wallpaper: from pre-revolutionary wallpaper to the pages of biological atlases depicting exotic birds. Some of the materials used were actual historical wallpaper and not modern recreations. For later periods they used Soviet newspapers as wallpaper. When the film's historical consultant visited the set, he was impressed that he couldn't spot the difference between recreations and authentic materials.
- Production also used authentic newspapers from 1942 to plug the holes in the windows of the girls' flat (as people of that period used to do). The art director found the historical issues at a flea market and they had to be hidden during production to prevent crew taking it as souvenirs. These newspapers were also used to make paper napkins for the New Year's scene at the hospital. They were placed on the patients' bedside tables.
- The scaffolding was constructed in three days and destroyed in less than five hours.

MEDICAL SCENES AND PROPS:

- The close-up shots of injections in the hospital scene were shown in such a way that production had to design and manufacture custom-made foldable needles.
- To make the bandages look more authentic, the crew soaked them in tea and dried them on radiators before shooting. This gave the bandages the appearance of having been washed multiple times.
- The crew had access to archives and used them to recreate, in detail, specific scenes from post-war Leningrad life. For example, in the scene where the patients in the hospital celebrate New Year's, the decorations – thread with pieces of wadding threaded through – were recreated with historical accuracy by the prop-masters.
- During the post-war years, the patients who lost limbs in Leningrad's hospitals had to design exercise equipment for physical therapy themselves. The prop-masters found and recreated the authentic designs from that time.
- The film's crew used a team of medical experts to determine where Masha should have scars and how they should look, based on the injuries she suffered during the war and the operations that she had to undergo. They did extensive research on the medicine, medical practices, equipment and personnel of the military hospitals in 1945.
- The walls in the hospital were painted during the shooting. The work was organized in three stages, but in the last episode, we see the corridor completely renovated. This wasn't originally planned. The producers came up with the idea and the director liked it, so in the end the walls were painted in between takes, which can be shown in the film.

ABOUT THE CAST AND CREW

VIKTORIA MIROSHNICHENKO (IYA)

Viktoria was born in the Siberian city of Irkutsk in 1994. She graduated in 2019 from the Russian Institute of Theatre Arts – GITIS, from Evgueni Kamenkovich and Dmitry Krymov's workshop, and makes her acting debut in *Beanpole*.

VASILISA PERELYGINA (MASHA)

Born in 1996 in Moscow, Vasilisa graduated in 2019 from the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) in Moscow, where she studied under Sergey Soloviev. *Beanpole* is her debut feature film.

KSENIA SEREDA – DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Born in Moscow in 1994, Sereda graduated from the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography and has since amassed credits including *Little Bird* (2014), *Petersburg. A Selfie* (2016), *House on Clauzewerts's Head* (2018), *Call DiCaprio!* (2018), and *Acid* (2018).

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION COMPANIES

NON-STOP PRODUCTION

Non-Stop Production was established in 2005 and is jointly owned by producers Alexander Rodnyansky and Sergey Melkumov. It is one of the leaders and major studios in the Russian film market whose projects enjoy state support. *Non-Stop Production* produces a wide range of film and TV content, from quality indies and auteur cinema to high budget mainstream movies, as well as TV mini-series.

The company's projects include: *Elena* (Un Certain Regard prizewinner at the Cannes Film Festival), *Leviathan* (Best Script at Cannes Film Festival, Golden Globe™ and the Academy Award® nomination for Best Foreign Language Film) and *Loveless* (Jury Prize at Cannes Film Festival, Golden Globe™ and the Academy Award® nomination for Best Foreign Language Film) by internationally acclaimed director Andrey Zvyagintsev.

Together producers Rodnyansky and Melkumov are responsible for most of the highest-grossing Russian films of the last decade, including such smash-hits as *The 9th Company*, *The Inhabited Island* and *Stalingrad* by Fedor Bondarchuk, which was the highest grossing Russian film of the decade, and the first ever Russian film in IMAX 3D, bringing in over \$70 million internationally. Their subsequent joint project, adventure film *The Duelist* was the third Russian film in IMAX format, transporting audiences to the unexpected and intriguing world of 19th century Saint Petersburg.

Both producers' involvement in Russian auteur cinema is extensive. In addition to the projects mentioned above, Rodnyansky and Melkumov produced respectively: *The Sun* directed by Alexander Sokurov (Official Selection – Berlin International Film Festival) and *Tulpan* by Sergey Dvortsevoy (Main Prize at Un Certain Regard at Cannes Film Festival).

AR CONTENT

Launched in May 2018, AR Content is Academy Award® nominated producer Alexander Rodnyansky's Los Angeles based development and production banner, designed to deliver premium quality content for film and television on an international scale. With a focus on true stories, around global events or spotlighting relevant and diverse cultural situations, the company will also delve into fictional drama and genre films. AR Content is a hub for filmmakers and screenwriters to develop their passion projects and partner with producers and distributors, in order to foster a cohesive creative vision.

Rodnyansky has produced prestigious films such as Academy Award® nominee *Loveless* and Golden Globe® winner *Leviathan*. In Cannes, AR will debut *Beanpole* from emerging Russian filmmaker Kantemir Balagov as part of the official festival line-up.

AR Content's nascent slate includes: Kevin Macdonald's Untitled World War II refugee documentary; the Ziad Doueiri-directed *Debriefing The President*; and Kornel Mondruzco's series "Everybody's Woman."

CREDITS

CAST

Viktoria Miroshnichenko IYA
Vasilisa Pereyginina MASHA
Andrey Bykov NIKOLAY IVANOVICH
Igor Shirokov SASHA
Konstantin Balakirev STEPAN
Ksenia Kutepova LYUBOV' PETROVNA (SASHA'S MOTHER)
Olga Dragunova SEAMSTRESS
Timofey Glazkov PASHKA

CREW

DIRECTED BY Kantemir Balagov
WRITTEN BY Kantemir Balagov, Alexander Terekhov
PRODUCED BY Alexander Rodnyansky, Sergey Melkumov
ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS Ellen Rodnianski, Michel Merkt
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY Ksenia Sereda
ORIGINAL MUSIC BY Evgueni Galperine
PRODUCTION DESIGNER: Sergey Ivanov
COSTUME DESIGNER: Olga Smirnova
SOUND DESIGNER Rostislav Alimov
PRODUCTION COMPANIES Non-Stop Production, AR Content

