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Director Darya Zhuk is a truly international filmmaker, living in New York and telling a story about house music dreams set in Belarus.

EAST OR WEST, HOUSE IS BEST

Darya Zhuk wants Belarus to have its own cinema and is providing a strong contribution.

With her debut feature *Crystal Swan* opening the East of the West competition at the 53rd KVIFF, Belarusian director **Darya Zhuk** is announcing her international presence in dramatic fashion. The story of a young, uncompromising woman intent on leaving 1990s Belarus for Chicago to experience the city's house music scene as a DJ isn't only an entrancing visual experience but deals with some sensitive social issues, especially gender relations. Zhuk's intention was to tell a story from her generation and with the help of Alina Nasibullina's masterful performance and a strong supporting cast – this is exactly what she's done.

by Michael Stein

You left Belarus at 16 for the US, where you studied film. Do you consider yourself a Belarusian filmmaker or also an American filmmaker to a degree?

I definitely consider myself a Belarusian filmmaker. In terms of being an American filmmaker, I'm not an American citizen yet but I married an American and I guess it took me many years to feel more connected

to America. I don't know if the latest president is inspiring me to join the nation necessarily (laughs). I would say I'm a Belarusian filmmaker living in New York. New York has a very separate, multicultural vibe to it.

Specifically as a filmmaker where do you see yourself in relation to film from the US as opposed to film from Belarus or Russia? It's interesting – my film school [Columbia] was very influenced by

Miloš Forman, who brought Frank Daniel – who was one of his screen-writing gurus – to America so in a way I'd say, yes, I care about the story, I care about the audience, I care about structure and in a way, yes, I'm not looking up to Tarkovsky but I am looking up to Larisa Shepitko or Kira Muratova, women filmmakers from the Soviet Union that I admire.

But then I also admire Jim Jarmusch, who came out of the New York independent scene. So there's definitely an amalgamation, this wonderful mixture. As a filmmaker you always look at the international cinema.

What about Belarusian cinema?

Belarus doesn't have a cinema necessarily, a cinema history in the same way I would say that *Come and See* by Klimov is a Belarusian film. He used Belarusfilm as a base to make the film. It's a famous WWII movie. So I did take a lot from the American school of storytelling but then I would say the American school took a lot from the European school. It's all very connect-

ed. I do like a lot of American filmmakers that are very New York so maybe that's why I'm in New York and not LA right now.

Do you think it's possible to take the best from both sides?

I hope I'm taking the best from both. American films sometimes lack the second layer for me, where maybe sometimes they are too commercial or are just a commercial vehicle for a star. I obviously tried to avoid that by making a film in Eastern Europe, where nobody knew the stars, where nobody cared about the casting choices I made so I would have full creative freedom.

Why this particular script?

I wanted to tell a story about a young woman who was a part of my generation and I just felt this hasn't been done so for me it was uncovering some new territory for that part of the world. Telling this particular story was very heartfelt for me because I want Belarus to have its own cinema. I want

young people to know that it's possible to do something out of the box and not maybe use the government system but go a different way, to go out and raise international funds.

What are you working on now and what kind films do you hope to make in the future?

Stories that touch upon the cross-section of cultural experience, meaning fish out of water. I'm really drawn to the characters that change countries, face cultural differences in different ways. Like immigration stories – I'm very attached to those, of course, because of my personal experience. I'm interested in women characters that are offbeat, complex – that's what I'm drawn to. But the story just has to be a good story. I have an idea to do another film in Belarus that I'm just developing right now that I need more resources for to tell the story of well-known figures that lived in Belarus, or in the Soviet Union for one reason or the other. I'm definitely moving in that direction right now. •

See you there

The Red Dragon
Producer Freddy Olsson's sidekick



The stuffed Red Dragon is a regular at KVIFF and so is his owner, the Swedish distributor/programmer/producer Freddy Olsson from the Göteborg Film Festival. The first time the Dragon came to town it was still Czechoslovakia; six months after the Velvet Revolution in 1990. All that's left from back then is the Dragon, Eva Zaoralová, Rudolf the barman at Pupp and the red chairs at Thermal.

This year, the Dragon is here to find the film pearls from Central and Eastern Europe. Already 250 years ago Karlovy Vary was a place for the West to meet the East, and KVIFF is a celebration of that tradition.

The must-see film for the stuffed animal is the Lithuanian film *Breathing into Marble*, **Giedrė Beinoriūtė's** debut about an adoption that turns

into a catastrophe. In the main competition, the Dragon is longing for the new film by **Ivan I. Tverdokskiy** from Russia, *Jumpman*. His *Zoology* was a huge success when it premiered at KVIFF 2016 and won the Special Prize of the Jury.

But aside from all that, we can't wait to see the World Cup football match on Tuesday at 4pm: Sweden vs. Switzerland. If you hear someone screaming at around 5:40 pm, it's just the Dragon celebrating the victory. **MB**

Breathing into Marble screens July 3 at 6.30 pm [Karlovy Vary Municipal Theatre], July 4 at 3.30pm [Čas Cinema] and July 6 at 1.30pm [Husovka Theatre]. *Jumpman* screens July 4 at 5pm [Grand Hall], July 5 at 10am [Pupp Cinema], July 7 at 9am [Drahomira Cinema]

Replay

"Just three sex scenes? You going through a creative block?"

These were the kind of jokes going around yesterday just outside the balcony bar on the first floor of the Thermal Hotel. This was not a conversation between filmmakers; rather, film jokes, puns and cartoons took center stage at the opening of an exhibition to commemorate the most beloved Czech cartoonist, Vladimír Jiránek, who would have turned 80 in June.

"I want to thank you, Marie, that you are not a Czech director," another cartoon read.

The exhibition, titled "Jiránek na plac" (Jiránek, places!) is organized by Reflex magazine – where Jiránek published hun-

dreds of cartoons over the years – and it will remain in the Thermal until the end of the festival. It features over 40 of his film-related works from the time when he was a cartoonist at the Summer Film School in Uherské Hradiště from 1995 to 1998.

Festival President Jiří Bartoška – Jiránek's longtime friend, neighbor and drinking buddy – came to open the exhibition. "I am probably the only person here who is actually in these cartoons," Bartoška said, pointing to one where a cigarette-smoking man with glasses complains to another: "Film is over, yeah. But sponsoring has a big future."

Then he laughed a little bitterly.

Foto: Petr Hloušek



KVIFF President Jiří Bartoška used to drink with Jiránek. Just a little bit.

Official selection



Reenactment of Romanian involvement in WWII brings up a host of issues.

Honing the barbarians
Romania’s entry screens tonight
in a world premiere at the Grand Hall

by Zbyněk Vlasák

Yes, you read that right. “*I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians*” is the full title of an Official Selection movie by Romanian director Radu Jude. In it we watch a young artist who decides to use council money to stage a performance in the local square using non-actors and military equipment to reenact Romanian involvement on the Eastern Front of WWII.

This involvement wasn’t positive. Quite the contrary. The then Romanian prime minister and “führer” was Marshal

Ion Antonescu, who allied the country to Nazi Germany and declared war on the Soviet Union. His government’s foreign minister, Mihai Antonescu, is reported to have uttered the sentence “I do not care if we go down in history as barbarians,” which gave Jude’s movie its title.

Mass murders of Jews took place under the marshal’s command. Up to 380,000 of them perished at Romanians’ hands. It is those events that the artist Mariana would like to commemorate. Her opponent is a town representative who tries to smooth the edges of her view of the past. He men-

tions that the performance in the square will be watched by children as well and there is no need to show the hanged or burned Jews; it’s sufficient if the Romanian soldiers just take them away as prisoners.

Obsession with the massacres

But it is not just conservative prudence Jude builds his argument on. He also points out that our obsession with the massacres of the past is hypocritical because out of a multitude we only pick a few of those that are convenient and happily forget about the rest. The possibility to learn a lesson from our own history is for him just another cliché. We can never get rid of history, we will never “solve” it, it will never end and will overlap into today.

This is precisely what Mariana herself finds out when she tricks the local authorities and pushes through her uncompromising vision of the massacre but sees that the viewers don’t understand her performance. It leads the protagonist to reflect on living in a world without empathy. ●

“**I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians**”

Romania, Czech Republic, France, Bulgaria, Germany

Today 2 at 7.30 pm Grand Hall

July 3 at 1 pm, Pupp Cinema

July 5 at 11.30 am Drahomíra Cinema



Getting out of prison isn’t everything it’s cracked up to be.

The price of family
Turkish noir Brothers balances morality against loyalty

by Will Tizard

From its opening in a youth prison through the twilight world that greets Yusuf upon his release a few minutes into *Ömür Atay*’s suspenseful Official Selection film, it’s clear that nothing is clear.

After all, ambivalent, tenuous and dangerous relationships form the web that makes up the world of *Brothers*, where we learn only as we drift through what Yusuf’s crime was – or at least what he was convicted of – and what is expected of him on his return to the world.

Why hasn’t his grieving mother ever visited? Yet she’s made the strange gesture of sending a new suit to him while he was still in stir. And why won’t his brother, Ramazan, just take him home once he’s finally free?

We begin to understand the complexity of their relationship on the road following a pathetic attempt at helping Yusuf make up for lost time at a brothel recommended by truckers. Trying to understand why his kid brother felt at a loss when surrounded by cheesy pop music, booze and hookers, Ramazan needles his young charge about spoiling the fun.

“I’m 17,” Yusuf answers.

His elder brother’s ignorance – along with the realization that this celebration could have easily landed Yusuf back behind bars if anyone had noticed he was underage – is one

of a growing number of signposts of both the distance and the complexity of their relationship.

Reward for silence

And home still isn’t in the cards, despite Yusuf’s dreams of returning throughout his years behind bars, it seems. Instead, there’s some family business to attend to first – business in which Yusef is told he has a nice piece of the action. And well he should: There’s always a reward for silence about the truth while in stir, as every Sopranos fan knows.

Shadowy imagery, tense talks on the road and neon suffused nocturnal prowling are rendered with moody framing by cinematographer A. Emre Tanyildiz, lending *Brothers* a thorough neo-noir ethos. Ethereal sound by Viktor Chouchkov, half of the Bulgaria-based Chouchkov Brothers production team (*Western, Son of Sofia*), who have been busy of late with a number of award-winning projects, further deepens the dark, mythic quality of this tale of lethal loyalty and moral nightmares. ●

Brothers

Turkey, Germany, Bulgaria

Today 5pm, Grand Hall

July 3 at 10am Pupp Cinema

July 5 at 9am Drahomíra Cinema

Three picks for today

Tristan Priimägi
Film Critic, Sirp



On the town

Michael Stein
Festival Daily Writer



We all love films about filmmaking. And censorship. *Bridges of Time* introduces a generation from the Baltic states of the 1960s that tur-

ned to a more ambiguous and poetic documentary style to bypass the rigid requirements of socialist realism. Like its heroes, the authors

of the film take an offbeat track instead of a highway to get there... But is there a destination? It’s a travelogue with pages lost and found, rearranged and mixed up.

Bridges of Time
Drahomíra Cinema

Director: Audrius Stonys, Kristine Briede
Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, 2018, 80 min
Today at 2pm



Get to Malé bistro early if you want a chance at their delicious food and coffee.

Food you want, food you need

Coming to KVIFF is a plunge into the realm of the senses – for your eyes seeing film after film until they begin to blur together; for your ears hearing the pounding – uh – music from all the outdoor bars; for your nose there’s the greasy smell of fast food as you pass in front of the Thermal wondering if you’ve had one too many.

Speaking of fast food, that’s sense number four – taste. Running between films, meetings, parties, sometimes all you have time for is a quick burger or slice of pizza.

After a few days eating becomes pure necessity drained of all pleasure, which is why finding a tasty, healthy exception to what Karlovy Vary has to offer seems vital to your survival, not only for your taste buds but for your stomach, too.

That’s why Malé bistro exists. I mean, that’s probably not exactly why it exists but for festivals it might as well be because it is exactly what I, you, we, need.

Get there bright and early and partake of their abundant breakfast menu, a godsend for those of

us who aren’t staying at the Grandhotel Pupp and wake up to a peculiar buffet spread that includes – in our hotel at least – spaghetti. At Malé bistro, scrambled eggs, omelets, croissants and French toast are on offer and you can even keep the festival spirit going and wash your omelet down with a glass of Prosecco for only 59 CZK.

Lunchtime starts anywhere from 11:30 to 12:00 but get there early if you want a table and enjoy their delicious coffee, a smoothie or fresh juice. Besides a soup and salad of the day there’s a meat and vegan option plus a nice array of fresh sandwiches. I went for a very satisfying and filling bowl of turkey couscous.

And if you’ve truly overindulged your senses and wake up in Aeroport at 7 am you’re in luck, Malé bistro is just across the street so you can hop on over for breakfast or that Prosecco.

Malé Bistro

Jaltská 3, Festival Hours 7am – 10pm



Two Finnish deadbeats meet girls from the USSR. Together they set out to the Promised Land: the Soviet Estonia. A less-known Aki

Kaurismäki title is an enchanting little road movie if you appreciate his way of offering next to nothing when it comes to events, but

going all in with deadpan comedy and faux-American rock ‘n’ roll stylistics. Musical highlight: Finnish band The Regals covering B.B. King’s *Think It Over* at a local dance party.

Take Care of Your Scarf, Tatiana
Small Hall

Director: Aki Kaurismäki
Finland, 1994, 60 min
July 2, 9.30am



Peasant boy Lazzaro befriends young aristocrat Tancredi. Due to a pact they make, Lazzaro has to return to honor his promise after

a steep fall into the chasm. Alice Rohrwacher’s latest is a playful homage to the Italian cinema greats without becoming a paro-

dy of them. There is even a guy who can whistle like the wind, just so he can accidentally recreate those desolate Fellini scenes with a lost hero wandering around. Magical.

Lazzaro Felice
Grand Hall

Director: Alice Rohrwacher
Italy, Switzerland, France, Germany, 2018, 125 min
Today at 2pm

Kviffefe Tweet of the day

Rory O’Connor @RorySeanOC
Film Writer @TheFilmStage



Just saw a man bring a full tub of popcorn into a James Benning film. Respect. #KVIFF

Czeching in



In King Skate, the boys are back in town.

Everybody wants some!!

In King Skate, Šimon Šafránek pays playful homage to the skateboarders in Czechoslovakia.

by Marta Bałaga

Writer, journalist, DJ and our dear colleague at Festival Daily, Šimon Šafránek dedicates his crowd-pleasing first feature documentary *King Skate* – premiering today at 10.30 pm at Grand Hall – to the sudden rise of skateboarding in communist Czechoslovakia. With the help of a throbbing punk soundtrack, as energetic as its protagonists Ivan Zobák Pelikán, Petr Forman and Luděk Váša, and never-seen archive footage, he proves that boarding was never just about Stacy Peralta.

When did you first find out about these guys?
There is this book called *Prkýnka na maso jsme uřízli* [We Sawed our Cutting Boards Off] – that’s how they used to

make the first skateboards. If you watch *Dogtown and Z-Boys*, the history is always the same but in the Eastern block they didn’t even have polyurethane wheels! So instead, they

would just come up with all these weird ideas, like wheels made from hockey pucks.
Or bearings made out of grenades.
It was a DIY culture! Back then,

having a skateboard was special. It was the exclusivity that united them – it was the same with snowboarding in the 1990 s. After seeing these photos in the book I started to wonder if they have some recordings as well. I spotted our producer in one of them and called her up – it made approaching them so much easier. One gave me hours of footage nobody had seen before, shot mostly in 8mm, and we started from there.

How did you decide what to choose?
I was going for the emotion. We would always ask, ‘Where is the emotion in this footage?’ Otherwise we wouldn’t use it. There were so many dicks in these shots. And boobs. In the previous cut, we had much more and then we just went: dude, maybe we should cut some.
We didn’t want to go too deep into what they are doing now, even though some still compete. One wanted to show us some tricks once, fell down and just laid there for 30 seconds straight, only to shake it off. For me, the most important thing was to stay in the 1980s, listening to this message that you can have your freedom if you just go for it. Sometimes, we would sit in the editing room thinking that we would really like to be there with them. It’s just so beautiful.

And playful: One of them even says that they used to “eat” beer.
It’s so Czech [laughs]. I think it must have been awesome to go with your friends to the woods, sit by the river with a keg of beer, just skating and having a lot of fun. That’s why we wanted to

have a lot of music, because it gets you in this mood much easier than pictures. We went with the ones they were listening to – you even see a guy wearing a Devo T-shirt at one point – Sex Pistols, The Clash. Some were by our friends and others by this French band Pravda. Just think about it – you would go somewhere for the weekend, do whatever you want to do... Everybody wants that. Not to mention there must have been a lot of sex.

They are quite unapologetic about how they used to view female skaters. “I never liked them, but some of them looked hot,” goes the summary.
I think it’s a joke. Or maybe it isn’t. I wanted to include more women but in their films you can only see a couple of girls skating. Maybe there were more but I don’t think many girls would like to go as fast as possible, jump onto another skateboard that’s 5 meters away and fall flat on their face. But I can relate to boys doing that to attract their attention. It might be a stereotypical way

of perceiving gender roles but there really was a lot of freedom for everybody.

Even given the political situation at the time?
I think it was always more about rebelling against the old than the politics. One of the guys, Petr, is the son of Miloš Forman so obviously for him it was a political issue. But others were just trying to live their life. Sure, city councils would give them hell when they would try to organize some events, which is funny because skateboarding is basically a non-competing sport. But it was just another excuse to get together, you know? This movie is all about friendship. ●

King Skate

Czech Republic

Tonight at 10.30 pm
Grand Hall

July 5, 9.30 pm, Čas Cinema

July 6, 10.30 pm
Husovka Theatre



Šimon Šafránek says friendship drove the subjects of his film, shown in the Special Events section.

1918

100

2018

CZECH AND SLOVAK CENTURY

Many of us missed out on the good times of the First Republic. We had to live in times that were not entirely positive. Despite that, we held on to our pride and regained our freedom. We, the Czechs and Slovaks, must not let it be taken away.

come celebrate with us

Viktor Preiss
famous Czech actor

#czech100
czechandslovakcentury.com

Guest star



Tim Robbins and Morgan Freeman in the 1994 film The Shawshank Redemption.

Compromise is a dangerous thing

Tim Robbins isn't shy about taking on bad scripts, bad policies and great music

Actor-director **Tim Robbins**, who once dreamed of a career as a folk musician, says he's long been inspired by film artists who buck the system, especially Miloš Forman. Robbins himself has challenged authorities often, once getting banned from the Oscars for protesting the refugee policies of George W. Bush. In comments to the press and public at KVIFF, Robbins spoke – with his upcoming concert with The Rogues Gallery Band coming up on July 4 – of his luck, inspirations and approach to storytelling. The text was edited from a press conference by Will Tizard.

Faces

Today the festival welcomes director **Paweł Maślona**, to present his film *Panic Attack* in the main competition. In the documentary section competition director and screenwriter **Tomáš Bojar** is coming with *Breaking News* and director **Yuqi Kang** with *A Little Wisdom*.



Wolfgang Fischer

Director **Vladimir Bitokov** is bringing his film *Deep Rivers* and director and producer **Beata Parkanová** is screening *Moments*, both are part of the East of the West competition section. The Another View section wel-



Gianni Zanasi

comes **Sergej Loznica** for the films *Victory Day* and *Donbass*. Director **Wolfgang Fischer** is



Rachel Shenton

screening his film *Styx* and directing brothers **Damiano D'Innocenzo** and **Fabio D'Innocenzo** will show *Boys Cry*. Fellow countryman, director **Gianni Zanasi**, is bringing his film *Lucia's Grace* to show in the Horizons section. The People Next Door section welcomes **Ivo Trajkov** (*The Past*) and director **Chris Overton** along with actress **Rachel Shenton**



Sergej Loznica

representing their Academy Award-winning short film *The Silent Child*. Director **Petr Zelenka** will arrive for the exclusive release of the preview of two episodes of the third series of the HBO series *Therapy*.

Events



Richard Linklater will talk about the Austin Film Society during his KVIFF TALK.

Industry events you don't want to miss today

Artificial intelligence and script analysis: Predicting commercial and critical success for European and independent film

Hosted by: Nadira, founder and CEO of ScriptBook

10 am, Industry Pool Hotel Thermal

Big data and artificial intelligence are impacting how entertainment is being made today and how it will be made in the future. In this session,

How does your role as the protagonist of the 1994 film The Shawshank Redemption continue to affect your life?

Pretty much every day that I'm out in public someone says something extremely nice to me about that film. So if I'm having a bad day there's always some positivity out there. I think it's really awesome to have that. It's such a nice thing to be remembered for such a good film. There's a lot of people that are remembered for very popular films that might not have been received so well. I feel blessed that that film has meant something for so many people.

How did it happen that you took that role and why did you decide to take it on?

It was a really, really good script. It was one of the best scripts I've ever read and both Morgan Freeman and I and the cast, the cinematographer, Roger Deakins, knew that this script had great potential. But we had no idea at the time how much it would resonate for so many people for so long. I don't think you can ever really know that. When it came out it wasn't immediately a huge success. It wound up with its longevity by more and more people discovering the film through video cassettes and DVDs and television. It's a testament to the film itself that it did endure.

You said that you were struck by the honesty and richness Loves of a Blonde when it screened on opening night here. Was Forman always an inspiration for you?

Miloš Forman made some of the most beautiful films that I've seen - *Amadeus*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* - so when I got a chance to meet him I was nervous. Most of the people that I've met that I've idolized have actually turned out to be really great people, not egotistical. When I met Miloš I really wanted to work with him. When

I met with him he was expressing his frustration with the system. This experience gave me a great inspiration, a great love for Miloš Forman - that he would, after having the successes that he's had, that he would still retain his integrity and retain his vision of what an artist should be.

This was the incident in which a Hollywood studio sent Forman a poster for a film he hadn't yet made and it angered him and made him cancel the project.

It's difficult sometimes – when you're trying to maintain a career – to say no. To draw a line and say 'that's enough' – I will not cross that line.' That I was able to witness Forman say that gave me a touchstone for my own life and career.

Have your outspoken political comments gotten you into trouble publicly or in your career?

I have no way of knowing. If I had been safe, if I had kept my mouth shut when something I felt needed to be said needed to be said, if I had not spoken out I don't know that

I would like myself very much. I think compromise is a dangerous thing when you're talking about artistic integrity, the truth.

And to know something and to not say anything is for me a betrayal of what democracy is. The reason we have freedom of speech in a democracy is not to use it when it's convenient; it's to use your speech when it's difficult.

Growing up with folk music all around you, did this shape the music you play with your band?

I play a lot of originals that I've written and do some cover songs, usually of songs that are not really well known. We're not a karaoke kind of thing. Traditional roots music - blues, see shanties... very much in the tradition of Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger with a little Billie Holiday thrown in. ●

Concert: Tim Robbins and The Rogues Gallery Band

July 4 at 9 pm Municipal Theater



Reporters and fans spoke for hours with Tim Robbins this week, covering work, morality and politics.

11 am – 12.30 pm, Cinema Čas

KVIFF has partnered closely with Trieste Film Festival, the When East Meets West platform and MIDPOINT script development program. Together they will showcase nine projects in development from the region of Central and Eastern Europe at this year's KVIFF. These selected projects will have gone through treatment in the Feature Launch program and will be ready for co-production.

KVIFF TALK with directors Richard Linklater, David Zellner and Andrew Bujalski on the subject of the Austin Film Society

Hosted by: American journalist Peter Debruge

1.30 pm, Congress Hall

This year's festival pays homage to the Austin Film Society, a non-profit film organization founded in 1985 that today is one of the most important institutions of its kind in the USA.

Works in Progress

2 – 4 pm, Cinema Čas

Producers and directors from Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the former Soviet Union and now also the Middle East will introduce new films that will premiere after the Karlovy Vary IFF.