

THE STUDENT - 2016 RUSLAND - 118 MIN.

Distributie: Arti Film VOF - Hilversum
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Première datum: 26/01/17



Synopsis

Terwijl een middelbare schoolklas in het Russische Kaliningrad zwemles heeft, zit één leerling volledig gekleed langs de kant. Het is Venya die weigert het water in te gaan te midden van meisjes in bikini uit protest tegen de onzedelijke kleding die de Heer een gruwel is. Want Venya heeft God ontdekt. Hij hoeft zijn beduimelde exemplaar van de Heilige Schrift niet meer in te kijken om zijn omgeving met een passend Bijbelcitaat om de oren te kunnen slaan.

Aarzelend komt de schoolleiding hem tegemoet: voortaan moeten de meisje een badpak dragen. Maar Venya heeft intussen zijn pijlen alweer gericht op de onaanvaardbare lessen seksuele voorlichting en dat bij biologie Darwins evolutietheorie onderwezen wordt. De directrice van de school dringt er bij biologielerares Elena op aan ook het Bijbelse scheppingsverhaal in de les te behandelen, maar zij is dat beslist niet van plan. Ze neemt zich voor de confrontatie met Venya aan te gaan en hem met zijn eigen wapens te verslaan...

Korte synopsis

De Russische middelbare scholier Venya heeft God ontdekt en gaat met Bijbelcitaten tekeer tegen alles wat in zijn ogen verwerpelijk is, zoals onzedelijke kleding bij zwemles en Darwins evolutietheorie bij biologie. Terwijl de schoolleiding schoorvoetend concessies doet, durft alleen zijn biologielerares de confrontatie met deze extreme leerling aan te gaan...

Tagline

Een Russische scholier drijft zijn omgeving tot wanhoop met zijn extreme interpretatie van de Bijbel.

Achtergrond film

Regisseur Kirill Serebrennikov (1969) werkt vooral als theaterregisseur, met tussendoor tv-werk en het regisseren van films.

Enkele jaren geleden bracht hij het Duitse toneelstuk 'Märtyrer' van Marius von Mayenburg op de planken, dat hij vervolgens bewerkte tot de film 'The Student', waarbij hij het stuk duidelijk aan de Russische situatie aanpaste. Zo is zijn film een duidelijke aanval op de toenemende invloed van de Russisch-Orthodoxe kerk op de samenleving in het land van Poetin. En het wordt duidelijk dat ook de Bijbel genoeg teksten bevat die een getroebleerde jongere tot extreme daden kunnen verleiden. Dat Venya al die teksten niet uit zijn duim zuigt laat Serebrennikov zien door in de hoek van het beeld steeds te vermelden in welk Bijbelhoofdstuk het betreffende citaat te vinden is. Door te werken met lange camera-instellingen geeft de filmmaker zijn acteurs de kans om de flitsende dialogen tot vol effect te laten komen.

De film werd bekroond op meerdere festivals en op Film by the Sea ontving de film de Youth Jury Award.

Festivals en Awards

- * Filmfestival Cannes 2016 Officiële selectie Un Certain Regard
- * Filmfestival Cannes 2016 François Chalais Award
- * Biografilm Festival Bologna Audience Award
- * Filmfestival Cannes 2016 Nominatie Un Certain Regard
- * Munich Film Festival 2016 Nominatie Best Film
- * Festival Karlovy Vary Official Selection
- * Film by the Sea Vlissingen Youth Jury Award



BIO DIRECTOR

Kirill Serebrennikov (7 September 1969, Rostov-on-Don)

Russian theater and film director, TEFI television industry award laureate, competitive program award winner at Kinotavr Russian open film festival and International Rome Film Festival; since 2012 he is the artistic director of Gogol Center.

Kirill Serebrennikov was born in Rostov-on-Don, and finished school with a gold medal. His father is a surgeon, and his mother – a Russian language and literature teacher. He staged his first performance during his early school years. In 1992 he graduated from Rostov State University physics department with honors. During his student years, in 2008 he formed an experimental actor-director course at the Moscow Art Theatre School. By 2012 the class had transformed into Studio Seven, which later became a Gogol Center resident. During 2011-2014 Kirill was the artistic director of the Platform project at the Winzavod Centre for Contemporary Art. Currently resides in Moscow.



FILMOGRAPHY AND AWARDS

Film Director

- 1998 "Mysteries of the Storm" 1998 "The Swallow"
- 1998 "The Undressed"
- 2001 "Rostov-Daddy" (TV series) 2002 "The Dairy of a Murderer" 2003 "Bed Stories"
- 2004 "Ragin", written by Mkhail Ugarov and Dmitri Zverkov 2006 "Playing the Victim"
- 2008 "Yuriev Den"
- 2009 "Short Circuit" (segment "Shrimp's Kiss")
- 2012 "Betrayal"

Awards

- 1999 **TEFI National television industry** award winner for direction.
- 2005 Karlovy Vary International Film Festival prize winner.
- 2006 Grand-prix of **Kinotavr Russian open film festival** and **Rome Film Festival** for "Playing the Victim".
- 2008 "Yuriev Den" is mentioned at **Kinotavr** in **Best Actress category** (Ksenia Rappoport).
- 2012 "The Scumbags" performance is awarded **The Golden Mask Russian National Theater** prize for best small-scale production.
- 2012 "Betrayal" nominated for **Golden Lion** at **Venice Film Festival**.



INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR at CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

No Film School: The story was adapted from a play which you produced, correct?

<u>Kirill Serebrennikov</u>: Yes, originally it was a play by Marius von Mayenburg, which he staged in the Schaubühne Theater in Berlin. I wrote him for permission to adapt it. I [staged] the production in the Gogol Center, a theater which I've run for three years, and it was very successful. [Mayenburg] didn't come to Russia to the opening because of political issues. He's strictly against the Anti-Gay Law in Russia, so he wanted to support the gay community in Russia and in Germany, who are fighting against this terrible law. He saw the film yesterday for the first time and was very excited.

NFS: How did you transition from the theater to producing the film?

<u>Serebrennikov</u>: We decided shoot [the film], but we had no money from the government, only independent money. I asked the producers if they were scared of political issues and all the religious things, which is not good to talk about in Russia now. They told me, "No, it will be an independent movie." Last August we shot in Kaliningrad, a former German city, which became Russian after the Second World War. There we found the school, the children, the flat, apartment of the main character and so on.

NFS: So you cast most of the actors from the town?

<u>Serebrennikov</u>: Mainly the cast came from the theater production, but I changed the main character because the actor in the theater is older. I had to find a real boy, a young actor. And the other actors are real boys and girls from sports colleges. "The DPs in Russia are great and a lot of them work perfectly in Hollywood." The other actors and actresses came from the theater production, so they knew the lines when we started working on the film, but I decided to shoot it through long takes. We had several rehearsals before shooting every day. It was completely different from theater.

NFS: How did you structure the long takes?

<u>Serebrennikov</u>: The longest one was 11 minutes, but I cut in the middle because I wanted to join the best takes; we had two or three we shot with real light. The period of shooting was very short; we had only two or three takes and it was a nightmare because we had 30 non-professionals and three professionals, who all had to act spontaneously.

In *Birdman*, they did it for many months and prepared very carefully. We had no such opportunities because of money, so we did it very fast. The whole shoot was a month. "We created [this] film without any fear."

NFS: Tell me a bit about collaborating with your DP, <u>Vladislav Opelyants</u>. The cinematography is striking, almost operatic.

<u>Serebrennikov</u>: He is master, a very famous DP in Russia. He worked a lot with Nikita Mikhalkov, one of the main Russian directors from Soviet period. I told him, "Look we



[don't have] a lot of money, we have almost no lights, but here is the story and I want to take it with long takes." For him it was crazy, but he told me, "Okay let's try." I told him, "I'm not afraid of anything, so let's do something crazy." He has an open heart and he is a very good guy for collaboration. I think the DPs in Russia are great and a lot of them work perfectly in Hollywood, in the European movies and Russian movies. The level of their work is incredible.

NFS: Throughout the film, Venya demonstrates that he is troubled. He's struggling with something very painful that he can't identify. Do you think people turn to religion because they are in pain?

<u>Serebrennikov</u>: Religion always comes with pain and trauma. Originally, religion was love, but it doesn't work in our life, in our world. Now, religion is a point of aggressive misunderstanding of different nations and countries. It's a point of terrorism, of separation. It's terrible.

"This new generation of Russian producers are very smart, well-educated, and don't feel fear."

NFS: In the context of Russia versus America, what does free speech mean to you?

<u>Serebrennikov</u>: Freedom. Let's say freedom. To be honest with everyone is of the highest importance. It's a value to die for, or to live for. I think the characters are fighting for their vision of life; it's a fight of different consciousnesses. For this teenage boy, it's, of course, a testosterone explosion, and the girls don't pay attention to him and he has a crisis in his family, no father, mother is stupid. Nobody understands him and he has to do something with his ego, to show himself to the world, "Here I am." It's a problem and it [evolves into] violence, into catastrophe.

NFS: In the political landscape of Russia, do you feel like you have the ability to make a film about anything without consequences?

<u>Serebrennikov</u>: We created [this] film without any fear. It's probably because this new generation of Russian producers are very smart, well-educated, and don't feel fear. It's amazing.

It gives me hope that, for instance, I [staged] a theater production based on Heiner Müller's texts and the set is 20 completely naked people on stage acting for two hours. Male and female. When some people in Russia [saw] it, they said they would kill [me], they would ban the performance, and I asked them immediately: "What for? Is this anti-what? Anti-power? Anti-Putin?"

NFS: And there were no consequences for that production?

<u>Serebrennikov</u>: No, it's on. I'll keep making work like that. It's awesome.



CAST AND CREDIT LIST

CREDITS

DIRECTOR: Kirill Serebrennokov

DOP: Vladislav Opelyants

ART DIRECTOR: Ekaterina Scheglova

COMPOSER: Ilya Demutsky

EDITING: Yury Karikh

SOUND: Boris Voit

CAST

VENIAMIN: Petr Skvortsov

ELENA LVOVNA: Victoria Isakova

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL: Svetlana Bragarnik

PE TEACHER: Anton Vasiliev

VENIAMIN'S MOTHER: Yuliya Aug

LIDIA TKACHJOVA: Aleksandra Revenko

GRISHA: Aleksandr Gorchilin

ORTHODOX CULTURE TEACHER: Nikolai Roschin

