

M **A** NSARDA
film production

PRESENTS

AUTUMN WALTZ

A FILM BY OGNJEN PETKOVIĆ



Runtime: 18:16
Country of origin: Serbia, USA
Language: Serbian
Subtitle: English
Genre: Short fiction

MEDIA CONTACT:

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LOGLINE

A couple is trying to reach freedom out of a besieged town when they come across a barricade of unfriendly soldiers and attempt to lie their way across.

SYNOPSIS

During the 1990's in ex-Yugoslavia a war rages. A husband and wife try to escape their besieged town but come across an improvised barricade blocking the road. In attempt to get past it, they make up a story to tell the guards, but it quickly crumbles. Just before getting shot by the soldiers the man turns and says the word "Lemon," which just maybe is their way to freedom. Inspired by a true story.

DIRECTORS STATEMENT

I was born in Vukovar, the most bombed city during the war in ex-Yugoslavia, five years before the fighting started so my first experiences with the real world were a bit unique. Everything in my town was destroyed, every single house, every single tree. If you asked me at the time to describe a house, I would have told you that a house is just a chimney, for that's all that was left of the houses in my neighborhood after the bombing stopped – rows of chimneys reaching into the sky. The trees were without branches, the streets were full of holes.

After the war was finally over, this was the harsh reality. Still, I had a great childhood, for every house or yard in the deserted city was mine in a way. I could enter any yard to pick cherries, or enter a crushed house to find some abandoned treasure covered with dust and bricks. This was the biggest market in the world. One day, the children of the neighborhood found a house full of toys. It had been the toyshop owner's house and we all went there.

During that period I heard lots of incredible stories about people's struggles, defeats, and victories during the war. These stories stayed in my imagination over the years and I was inspired to make something from them. My family history, as is the history of every person from the Balkans, is filled with such war stories. So I decided to make a collection of short films all based on true stories of war. The project is called "Short War Stories" and it's about ordinary people -- children, wives, civilians -- in war. Usually watching war movies means watching soldiers as main characters being presented as the 'good guys,' but the bravest and most heroic humans in every war are civilians.

It is both very personal and universal because it is not about picking sides, it is about how **every single side lost someone during the war.**

So far, I've completed three of the stories: "Love," "Hide and Seek," and "Autumn Waltz". There are two more left to make ("Waiting" and "Life After Death.")

I wrote the script for "Autumn waltz" in 2017. The project is supported by the Serbian film center (FCS) and the American writer and producer Michael Vukadinovich. This story is based partly my parent's story. I based the characters of the soldiers on documentary photographs taken during the war. The end of the movie is based on my neighbor's story. He survived a similar situation only because he bought a drink for a guy once in the past. The movie is about "cheapness" of life in war time.

The Production process went well, besides some bad weather. February in Serbia, you can expect bad weather. We shot at one location, a place actually damaged during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. So we had the real thing as our set decoration. A huge challenge was synchronizing the video with the music. I wanted to have a real piano player who actually knows how to play. We bought an un-tuned piano. This wasn't what we wanted in the beginning, but we decided to keep this rough, un-tuned sound as it seemed fitting.

Ognjen Petković

FILMMAKER AND CAST BIOS

Ognjen Petković (director, screenwriter, editor) was born in Vukovar, Croatia in 1986. He graduated with an acting degree from the Academy of Arts, Novi Sad, Serbia in 2008. In 2015, he enrolled in the PhD program in Audiovisual Arts at Novi Sad Academy. He's made several short fiction, experimental and documentary movies, such as: *Three points* (2011), *Qatar* (2014), *Hands* (2016), *Love* (2017), *Crocodile* (Post-production), *Hide and seek* (2018), and *Autumn Waltz* (2018). His films have played at many international festivals, and won three awards, two for best movie and one for best screenplay. International festivals include: *Film court de Brest*, *GoDebut*, *Villeurbanne*, *CinemaCity*, *Manhattan international film festival*, *Regensburg*, *West Tokio film festival*, *Kinosmena*... At the moment he is working on feature documentary called, *Sounds of Silence*.

Michael Vukadinovich (producer) is a playwright and screenwriter. He co-wrote the feature film, *Rememory*, starring Peter Dinklage, which premiered at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival. His plays have been produced in New York and across the country, and internationally in Edinburgh, Prague, the Serbian National Theatre, and the Colombian National Theatre. Two of his original screenplays, *The Three Misfortunes of Geppetto* and *The Secret Ingredients of Rocket Cola*, have ended up on the annual Black List. He is currently writing and producing on Showtime's *Kidding*, starring Jim Carrey.

Tanja Pjevac(main actress) was born in 1980 in Novi Sad, Serbia. She started acting at the age 11 and by the age of 17 had performed at the United Nations in New York. Tanja graduated acting from the Academy of Arts Novi Sad, Serbia in 2003. She's played over 30 roles in every significant theater in Serbia (Jugoslavian Dramatic Theatre, Atelje 212, Serbian National Theatre, Biteftheater). She's participated in various festivals all over Europe. She's also actively works in other media, and has over 15 tv shows and 5 movies to her credit. She's permanently employed in the Serbian National Theatre as an actress.

FULL CREDITS

Directed, Written, Edited by

OgnjenPetković

Produced by

Michael Vukadinovich and **Aleksandra Lazarovski**

Cinematography

AleksandarRamadanović

Costume design

Ana Radojičić

Production design

MiljenaVučković

Sound design

Vladimir Rašković

Executive producer

Senka Nikolić

Editor's assistant

Nebojša Rudić

Make up artist

Snežana Crnoglavac

Director's assistant

Srećko Milosavljević

Colorist

Goran Modrić

Sound Recordist

Lazar Živanac

Boom Operator

Nikola Malogajski

Gaffer

Branislav Milinković

1 Assistant Camera

Miloš Čubrilo

2 Assistant Camera

Tibor Varga

Key Grip

MladenStojanović

Art Design Assistant

BojanRoganović

CAST

Woman

Tanja Pjevac

Man

JovoMaksić

Fur Soldier

LjubišaMilišić

Leather Coat Soldier

Marjan Apostolović

Santa Soldier

Stefan Trifunović

Top Hat Soldier

Ervin Hadžimurtezić

Piano Soldier

Todor Žuržovan

Woman Digger

Sonja Mladenov

Man Digger

Nikola Ivačkov

EXTRAS

Nikola Milanović

Vladimir Nešić

Stefan Milutinović

Bojan Pavlović