

A RISING FURY

WEDNESDAY JULY 26, 2023

Purple Palace in Cinema Nova on Wednesday, July 26th @ 8:15 pm.

<https://ticketing.cinemanova.com.au/Ticketing/visSelectTickets.aspx?cinemacode=1&txtSessionId=295710>

Pomegranate Studios Presents



82 mins – 2022 – Color – Ukrainian|English|Russian – Aspect ratio: 1.85:1 GENRE: **War Documentary**

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SYNOPSIS

“A RISING FURY” follows two hopeful Ukrainian idealists from the peaceful protest in Kyiv in 2013 to the full-scale Russian invasion to Ukraine in 2022. Pavlo and Svitlana met and fell in love at the Maidan Revolution and were filmed for almost 9 years with several expeditions to the frontlines of the war. When Russia invades Crimea and Donbas in 2014, Pavlo loses his family home and joins the Ukrainian military effort. To defend his nation, he engages in deadly firefights against former friends

and a close military instructor who join Russian forces. As Svitlana transports food and medical supplies, both find themselves on the battle lines, protecting their land, democracy, and their relationship.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I was born and raised in Ukraine, and in 1999 moved to the United States to pursue a career in cinema and literature. For nearly two decades I have been directing and producing films. In 2013 at the beginning of the Revolution of Dignity, I immediately flew to Kyiv, full of hope for a better future for my country. The history was unfolding before my eyes.

The revolutionary fairy tale turned into a bloody nightmare when Putin's regime punished Ukraine for its pursuit for freedom. First Russia annexed Crimea and invaded Eastern Ukraine in 2014, and then in 2022 launched a full-scale invasion. They shell hospitals and schools while destroying vital infrastructures and leveling entire cities. Ukraine is thrown into darkness during a cold winter. Russian soldiers kill and torture civilians, committing military crimes on a scale that history has not seen since World War II.

The cautionary tale of Ukraine can help people to realize how fragile their freedom is and the value of the Ukrainian people's heroism. They not only fight for their lives, but for democracy itself. I feel that revealing the truth about this war is my responsibility as a human being and a storyteller.

- Lesya Kalynska

Q&A with Directors Lesya Kalynska & Ruslan Batytskyi

1) How did you get involved with this project?

Kalynska: I initiated this project in November of 2013, starting to film the peaceful protest followed by the Revolution of Dignity. I could not imagine back then the launch of a full-scale military invasion into my country of Ukraine in 2022, and could not anticipate that this dramatic journey of filming will take almost a decade. The idea itself had a long history. As a teenager I participated in a student "Revolution on Granite" in 1990, which led to the restoration of Ukraine's independence in 1991. It was a historic event on an epic scale, a unique and very powerful experience. I was inspired by the massive protests on the streets of Kyiv, seeing brilliant people both politically and culturally creative all gathered in one place. Later in early 2000 I became fascinated by the "Color Revolutions". I wanted to make a film about the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004) but could not leave from the US since I was a full time MFA student at New York University and was making my first narrative short film at that time. But in 2013 when people gathered in Kyiv at Independence Square – I immediately flew to Ukraine and began making this documentary. I remember one of our first walks on Maidan with my old friend and renowned Ukrainian Director of Photography Serhij Mychalchuk. We photographed with small cameras just to get a feel for this movement. I will never forget this feeling: history was unfolding before our eyes, and we felt just how important it was to preserve these images for the future.

2) What was the most challenging aspect of making this film?

Kalynska: There were many challenging aspects of making this documentary. One of the biggest challenges was to tell a true story of contemporary Ukraine in the form of a feature documentary during a period of overwhelming propaganda coming from Russia. Starting in 2013, social media and press funded by the Kremlin worked very hard to discredit the Revolution of Dignity and portray the events in Eastern Ukraine as a civil war, and that is just not the case. The theme of Russian

“hybrid” strategies of warfare, followed by a hot war, has had little to no coverage in English language western media and cinema. One aspect of our doc that was especially hard to prove was the theme of “sleeper cells” created by the FSB – Russian intelligence. We learned about it when our main character opened up to us after several years of filming. Pavlo was brave enough to share stories of his youth in Donetsk, Eastern Ukraine. For us it was a revelation, and not

easy to understand at first. To learn that the Russian Federation targets naïve teenagers in Ukraine to brainwash and train them to become killing machines against their own people.

3) How did you find your characters?

Finding characters for the documentary while the historic events are taking place is very challenging. People you choose to follow should have a strong story but it’s difficult to predict, so much of it is based on your intuition. From the first days of the uprising, we’ve started filming some of my friends: artists, journalists, and musicians – the activists of Maidan. We interviewed about 20 people at first, and then narrowed down to seven. Pavlo and Svitlana, members of Maidan’s self-defense unit, stood out. When I learned that they met and fell in love on the frontlines of the Maidan uprising I was immediately drawn to that. When Russia invaded in 2014, Pavlo had volunteered to join the armed forces in Eastern Ukraine. He was the only one from all our characters at that time who decided to become a soldier. Svitlana decided to help his unit as a volunteer. We filmed hundreds of hours of material over almost 9 years.

4) How did you achieve the tone of the film?

The goal was to tell a strong, intimate yet global story, to help viewers to connect with our characters on a human level, to feel them. Our team created many edited versions before finding the right balance between our verité sequences, expressing pure experience, and building a metalevel with the help of graphics, animation, maps, voiceover – diving into the context of the historic events and offering some background explanation. The images feel intimate because we lived through dramatic events together with our characters. We enjoyed delightful moments such as the birth of their child, but also experienced tragic and dangerous situations with them as well.

5) What should viewers expect when watching the film?

The viewers should expect to go on a dramatic and emotional journey. To be prepared to understand Ukraine in greater depth along with the post-soviet region in general. We not only offer more background of recent events, but also philosophical and cultural circumstances leading to the Russian-Ukrainian war. The film can help viewers to understand the hidden strategies of Putin’s hybrid and hot wars. To explain why Ukrainians would rather die fighting, than to submit to Putin’s dictatorship.

CREATIVE TEAM



Lesya KALYNSKA | Director/Writer/Producer

Lesya Kalynska is a Ukrainian-American New York based award-winning director, producer, and screenwriter. Born and raised in Kyiv, Ukraine, she holds a PhD in Literature and an MFA in film writing and directing from NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts. In 2010-

2011 Lesya worked in Ukraine as the director of a docuseries about World War II “Level of Secrecy 18”.

After several award-winning short films Kalynska wrote, directed, and produced the feature documentary “A Rising Fury” about the war in Ukraine that was filmed for 9 years. It was released as a World Premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival in June of 2022 and won the Boundary Breaker Award at the Buffalo IFF. The film received international recognition as a Best Documentary nominee at the 2022 Warsaw Film Festival, the Golden Duke Award nominee at the Odessa IFF and nominated for the Bronze Horse Award at the Stockholm Film Festival.



Ruslan BATYTSKYI | Director/Producer/DP

Ruslan Batytskyi was born in the Dnipropetrovs’k region of Eastern Ukraine on Aug 3rd, 1986. After finishing school in 2003 he entered Dnipropetrovs’k National University where he received a Masters degree in

cybernetics and management. In 2009 he began studying cinema at the Kyiv National University of Theater, Cinema, and Television.

His several short films “Lethargy”, “Reed” and “Ukrainian Lessons” were presented at international festivals and received several awards.

In 2016-2018 he created a short documentary series “The least part of the work”. The series told the stories of people with neurosurgical diseases, how it changed their lives and their spirit going through many challenges. Ruslan has worked alongside Lesya Kalynska to debut “A Rising Fury”. The film is about the war in Ukraine and has been filming nearly 9 years. The World Premiere of “A Rising Fury” took place at the Tribeca Film Festival in June of 2022.



TJ COLLINS | Producer

Mr. Collins is an award-winning filmmaker with over a dozen films produced including short and feature narratives. His feature film debut "WILLETS POINT" received the Audience Award at the Long Island International Film Expo and was theatrically released

in the fall of 2010. He is a NALIP Producers Academy and Screenwriters Lab Fellow 2009. Additionally, his

screenplay "THE DRIVEN" aka Eli Moran was one of ten nationally selected projects for the NALIP Screenwriters Lab sponsored by The Walt Disney Company, NBC Universal, FOX and HBO.

Mr. Collins completed the narrative feature sports drama "THE DRIVEN" serving as writer, director and producer. “THE DRIVEN” held a World Premiere at the 25th Dances With Films Festival – NYC edition. Since 2016 Mr. Collins has also produced and Co-written a feature documentary about the war in Ukraine “A RISING FURY”. The film premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in June of 2022.



Jonathan Borge LIE | Producer

Jonathan Borge Lie is an award-winning producer who specializes in hard-hitting documentaries for the national as well as the international market. His latest film *Privacy of Wounds*, about survivors from Syrian prisons, premiered in competition at IDFA in 2019.

Jonathan produced *DRONE*, a film about the secret

CIA drone war in Pakistan, which won numerous

awards, including The Most Valuable Documentary of the Year at Cinema for Peace in Berlin and The Golden Nymph Award. *DRONE* won the Amanda award, The Norwegian Oscar equivalent, and Gullruten, the Norwegian Emmy, for Best Documentary 2015. Jonathan was the co-founder and producer of Volt Film, where he produced *Recruiting for Jihad* and *iSynx*.



CREDITS

DIRECTED BY

Lesya Kalynska & Ruslan Batytskyi

PRODUCERS

Lesya Kalynska

Ruslan Batytskyi

TJ Collins

Jonathan Borge Lie

SCREENWRITERS

Lesya Kalynska - Writer

TJ Collins – Co-Writer

COMPOSER

Emiliano Mazzenga

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY Ruslan Batytskyi

CINEMATOGRAPHERS

Ruslan Batytskyi

Lesya Kalynska

Anton Fursa