

 71^e Internationale
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CPH:DOX
2021

OFFICIAL SELECTION
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**Visions
du Réel**
2021
Official Selection

A FILM BY
ALIAKSEI PALUYAN

COURAGE

PRESS KIT

DESIGN FOR FILMS

COURAGE

A film by Aliaksei Paluyan

With
Maryna Yakubovich
Pavel Haradnizky
Denis Tarasenko

Director of Photography
Tanya Haurylchyk, Jesse Mazuch

Producer
Jörn Möllenkamp

Editor
Behrooz Karamizade

A Living Pictures Production

World Sales
Rise and Shine World Sales

With the support of
Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien
HessenFilm und Medien

VARIETY

"Powerful. Captures the spirit of the popular uprising in Belarus."
"Paluyan captures the hopes of a population that spans across gender and generations, and there will always be something uplifting about watching people fight peacefully for freedom."

SCREENDAILY

"Absorbing, stirring."
"A portrait of a country at the crossroads, one that is likely to resonate with audiences worldwide"

www.lpp-film.com | www.riseandshine-berlin.de | www.greenhouse-pr.com

LOGLINE

An inspiring and encouraging documentary about the peaceful uprising of a nation against injustice and the brutal oppression of their democracy movements.



SHORT SYNOPSIS

Maryna, Pavel and Denis belong to an underground theatre group in Minsk, Belarus. In the course of the 2020 presidential elections, they take part in the peaceful mass protests, together with thousands of people. They narrowly escape arrest and torture. What unites them is the hope for freedom of speech and democracy.

SYNOPSIS

In the course of the presidential elections in Belarus in the summer of 2020, three actors from an underground theatre „Belarus Free Theatre“ in Minsk get caught up in the maelstrom of mass protests. They are drawn to the wide streets of Minsk to protest vociferously for freedom of speech and the long-awaited change of power. But the people’s voice is brutally crushed by the regime’s security apparatus. Members of the theatre group and many other people get arrested. The country is on the brink of civil war. COURAGE accompanies the courageous and peaceful resistance of Maryna, Pavel and Denis before and during the protests. The film takes a very personal look at the events and thus provides a close and gripping insight into the lives of people in today’s Belarus who are fighting for their freedom and the right to democracy.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

How would you feel when one person rules your home country for 26 years and there never was a chance for free elections? How would you act to gain basic democratic rights? In Belarus, where I come from, this is not a hypothetical question, it's in fact reality. That's why I have so much respect for all people in my home country who don't take no for an answer and who demonstrate and fight for a change under these circumstances.

The three protagonists of my film Denis, Marina and Pavel have been working as actors in the famous underground theater "Belarus Free Theatre" in Minsk for 16 years now. I have a very close relationship with them, and I really had the feeling that I needed to support them. As a director I wanted to make a film that shows the truth about their lives and their work and also what the people in Belarus feel and dream about right now.

One of the most emotional scenes of the film is the moment, where literally thousands of people marched to the parliament peacefully, united. It was an absolutely overwhelming feeling when you stand in the middle of this giant crowd, that is so gentle at the same time. Suddenly, a whole army of military troops is rushing out of the public building and everybody understands there is not one politician inside the parliament, only soldiers. But then a few women started approaching some of the young soldiers and started to give them flowers. And those soldiers, who were maybe 20 years old, took them! In return, the women began hugging them. Suddenly, everybody had the feeling that these armed recruits were at the people's side. For a brief moment you really had the feeling that this could be it! That now everything could change in my country.

Another important episode in COURAGE is, for me, the night in front of Okrestina, the prison most known for the torture of protesters that located directly in the city of Minsk. There were hundreds of parents, families and friends that had been waiting there for days in hope that their loved ones would be alive and maybe even released. It was absolutely silent. And then you hear how the big metal doors open and the first women are let go. All these people that have been waiting in silence start to applaud, but immediately become quiet again very quickly - because inside the prison, when the guards hear the cheering from outside, they will beat the other prisoners even more.

As an artist, I also wanted to implement how dangerous it is to create free art in such an authoritarian system. I wanted to show what price people pay when they speak out the truth, even when they express criticism in a creative way. I think COURAGE can show everybody, that democracy and freedom are values that you need to fight for, just like Denis, Marina and Pavel do.

I very much wish that COURAGE will make a difference, that it will have an impact and show that this topic is not only politically relevant, but also in a universal sense. Because the people of Belarus need the attention and the support of the world - right now and in the future.



DIRECTOR

Aliaksei Paluyan was born 1989 in Belarus. In 2012 he moved to Germany and studied film and television directing at the Kunsthochschule Kassel (Academy for the arts). He has become known to audiences as a director of fiction short films and documentaries that have been presented at festivals worldwide. With his unique artistic signature, Aliaksei Paluyan has achieved to transform highly personal stories from his homeland into themes of universal meaning and relevance. In 2019, his short fiction drama LAKE OF HAPPINESS, a german-belarusian-spanish co-production, premiered in Clermont-Ferrand, won a numerous awards at international festivals, was a candidate for European Short Film at the 33rd European Film Awards in 2020 and also longlisted for the Oscars 2021. Aliaksei's documentary film debut COURAGE had its world premiere at the 71st Berlin International Film Festival and was screened at major documentary film festivals as IDFA, Visions du Réel, CPH:DOX, HotDocs, Sheffield Doc/Fest, Krakow IFF.

Filmography (selection)

2021 Courage ,

2019 Lake of happiness (short),

2017 Country of Women (short)



PRODUCER

Jörn Möllenkamp Jörn Möllenkamp was born 1983 in Münster, Germany. Together with the directors and authors Behrooz Karamizade and Giorgi Abashishvili, he founded the production company LIVING PICTURES PRODUCTION GbR, whose credo is to produce unique films at an artistically high level. Since then Jörn Möllenkamp has realized numerous short films and creative documentaries. Jörn has been involved as a producer in over 20 films (both documentary and fiction) which have been selected at more than 200 festivals worldwide. Among them Berlinale, Rotterdam, Montreal, Clermont-Ferrand, Edinburgh, Palm Springs, Cork and Leeds. The films won more than 50 international and national awards. nated for the German Short Film award, selected as candidate for the European Film Award 2020 and currently qualified for the Oscars 2021.



TEAM

Written and directed by **Aliaksei Paluyan**
Producer **Jörn Möllenkamp**
Director of Photography **Tanya Haurylchyk, Jesse Mazuch**
Editing **Behrooz Karamizade**
Sound Design **Vensan Mazmanyant**
Original Sound **Artyom Busel, Alexei Busel**
Grading **Edmond Laccon**
Production Manager **Nikolai Lavreniuk**

MAIN PROTAGONISTS

Maryna Yakubovich
Pavel Haradnizky
Denis Tarasenko

TECHNICAL DATA

Germany 2021
Length: 90 minutes
Ratio: 1:2,35
Sound: 5.1



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COURAGE

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