



DOCUMENTARY BY
ANASTASIYA MIROSHNICHENKO

Debut

PERVAJA KINOVIDEO COMPANY PRESENTS DEBUT

PRODUCED BY VIKTAR LABKOVICH, ANDREY KLUKOVICH AUTHOR ANASTASIYA MIROSHNICHENKO, ELENA ANTONISHINA
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ALEXANDER MOROZ EDITED BY VARFALAMEY KURAGA SOUND BY VIACHESLAV KRUK MUSIC BY BORIS LANKOV
DESIGN MAKSIM KARBANOVICH COLOR CORRECTION NIKOLAY SHAVEL EXECUTIVE PRODUCER DARYA LABKOVICH
DIRECTED BY ANASTASIYA MIROSHNICHENKO



Debut Documentary

COUNTRY OF PRODUCTION: BELARUS
LANGUAGE: RUSSIAN
SUBTITLES: ENGLISH
LENGTH: 80/52 MINUTES
FORMAT: FULL HD
ASPECT RATIO: 1.78
SOUND: STEREO
YEAR: 2017
WORLD PREMIERE: IDFA 2017
TRAILER: [CLICK HERE](#)
[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/uu3-y99oara](https://youtu.be/uu3-y99oara)

Logline

Eleven female prisoners in Belarus are rehearsing for a theater play. The camera captures them as they are subtly freed from the stigma of being criminals.



Synopsis

Over 1500 women are detained in a Belarus prison for first-time offenders. Eleven of them have volunteered to take part in a theatre play. Their reasons vary: some see it as a small break from the tedium of prison life, some regard it as therapy, and others approach it as a practice run for when they return to society. The rehearsals serve as the leitmotif for this balanced portrait that subtly frees these women from the stigma of being criminals. The women talk as mothers, daughters and wives. They miss their families and wrestle with the guilt of losing so many years behind bars. The director uses various techniques to present these women as three-dimensional characters: close-up interviews about their fears, beautifully framed shots of the daily collective routines of jail life, images from surveillance cameras that emphasize how their lives are controlled, and of course their debut on the professional stage. By then, you almost feel as if you've landed in a feel-good movie with a happy ending, but the director doesn't let it get that far.

Synopsis #2

1500 women are serving their sentence in a penitentiary in the south of Belarus. Only those who broke the law for the first time fall into this category but by Belarusian law that means average prison-terms from 5 to 20 years. Long-term imprisonment fills women with dread to be forever separated from their families and get deprived of their vital support. For those who have children it is particularly unbearable. Rehearsals in prison theatre help women not to lose themselves. For eleven convicts, every entrance on stage is a breath of fresh air. The long-awaited premiere will take place at the State Drama Theater. Women will leave prison territory for the first time just for a few hours. Relatives and family will be able to witness their debut on the professional stage. For those who live behind barbed wire, this is a chance to appear in front of their relatives not as criminals. This is their second 'coming of age', a possible debut into a new life. The story of the production process is a reason to search for answers to the most complicated questions, about the cost of criminal misconduct and the expediency of long periods of isolation.



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Director's Note

I was immediately attracted when I heard about the theater project in the Gomel women's penitentiary. Having obtained permission from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, I got a unique opportunity to film in a closed institution for a year. In the beginning, I was interested mainly in the phenomenon of the theater and the influence of art on the people convicted of a crime. But during the filming, there has been a change of focus. In the film, the theater rehearsals will be a merging element, which will form a group portrait of the eleven characters and will tell what is it to be a woman and a mother behind bars.

The average terms of imprisonment in Belarus are from 5 to 15 years. But the real punishment for inmates is not the lack of personal space, endless searches or ugly clothing. Long-term imprisonment destroys a woman's psyche. The break with the family deprives a woman of the opportunity to be a mother and hurts her children irreversibly.

But we live in the country where a person, once she has committed a crime, is forever castigated. Society perceives any crime as a life-long stigma. For those with a criminal record, many doors are closed forever. It's almost impossible to find a job and get back to a normal life.

My film is not an attempt to justify the crime. This is the evidence of the tragedy of a woman who understands her purpose in life, only after a fatal mistake has already been made. With my work, I believe I can influence the public opinion, dissolve stereotypes and change the life of many people for better.



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History & Visual approach

According to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, we have the right to shoot only the 10 inmates (actresses), who have given us written permission to be on camera. At first, I was upset with that. But then I decided to turn it into a visual effect. All crowd scenes (line-ups on the parade ground, work at the sewing factory, dining room activities, residence area routines) will be seen as long distant static shots and static close-ups without showing faces. With those 'faceless' shots we want to emphasize that as inmates all women are faceless and grey. Their personalities dissolve into a solid mass. And only during theatrical rehearsals we can see their faces. In a deep metaphoric way, they get their faces and human appearances back, as they take part in the creative, artistic process. This helps us underline the healing power of art. We'll enhance this 'renaissance' by using a hand-held camera. The contrasting styles of static and mobile shots will create two different atmospheres and renditions of the same characters.

DEBUT took part in various European pitchings - in Vilnius (Lithuania), Docs Barcelona in Barcelona (Spain), Edinburgh Pitch in Edinburgh (Great Britain), Baltic Sea Forum for Documentaries in Riga (Latvia) and Docs Thessaloniki in Thessaloniki (Greece), where the film received the DOC ON AIR Award, as the best documentary project.



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Biographies & Filmographies

Director

ANASTASIYA MIROSHNICHENKO

Studied at the Belarusian State Academy of Arts (Documentary Film Directing department) and the State Academy of Postgraduate Education (Higher School of Advertising). She has been working in television since 2008 as a director of historical, entertainment and scientific TV programs. Her first documentary *CROSSROADS* (2014) won international TV and festivals acclaim, had a world premiere at Warsaw IFF, was awarded there with two prizes: Special Mention Jury Award and Audience Award.

Previous Films: *Crossroads* (2014)

Production

PERVAJA KINOVIDEO COMPANYY

Pervaja KinoVideo Company Ltd. was founded in 2007. It produces television content and commercials for leading Belarusian and Russian TV companies, as well as feature films and serials. The company has an experience in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture of Belarus and national film studio Belarusfilm. The company produced several projects from intellectual shows, reality shows, and sketches, to full-length television series. In fact, "Traces of the Apostles" a television series, later made into a film, produced in 2013 was successfully held on the TV channels of the VGTRK TV and Radio Broadcasting Company, TVC-Moscow and other regional Russian TV channels, as well as on the large Chinese CCTV channel - China Central Television, which has an audience of 900 million people. The series were also purchased for broadcasts in Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Ukraine, Slovakia, Check Republic, Bosnia and Herzegovina. *DEBUT* is Pervaja KinoVideo Company's first experience in producing a documentary film.



Producer

VIKTAR LABKOVICH

Started Pevaja KinoVideo Company in 2007. He is owner of the production company, producer of fiction films, co-writer of several books and films, as well as a co-owner of the national TV-channel "VTV" and radio station "Humor-FM".

Previous Films: *Our Belarasha* (2007), *Waiting Hall* (2009), *Outskirts* (2011), *Traces of the Apostles* (2013), *A State Boarder* (2016), *The Table* (2016).



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DIRECTOR ----- ANASTASIYA MIROSHNICHENKO
PRODUCER ----- VIKTAR LABKOVICH
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ----- DARYA LABKOVICH
DOP ----- ALEXANDER MOROZ
AUTHOR ----- ANASTASIYA MIROSHNICHENKO, ELENA ANTONISHINA
EDITOR ----- VARFALAMEY KURAGA
COLOR CORRECTION ----- NIKOLAI SHAVEL
SOUND BY ----- VYACHESLAV KRUK
MUSIC BY ----- BORIS LANKOV
DESIGN BY ----- MAKSIM KARBANOVICH

Articles in Press

October 12, 2017

EDN Congratulates! Five EDN Workshop
Projects Among IDFA 2017 Film Selection.

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November 02, 2017

34 Multimedia Magazine / "How to make
a film in a colony: an interview with
Anastasia Miroshnichenko".

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Design in Press

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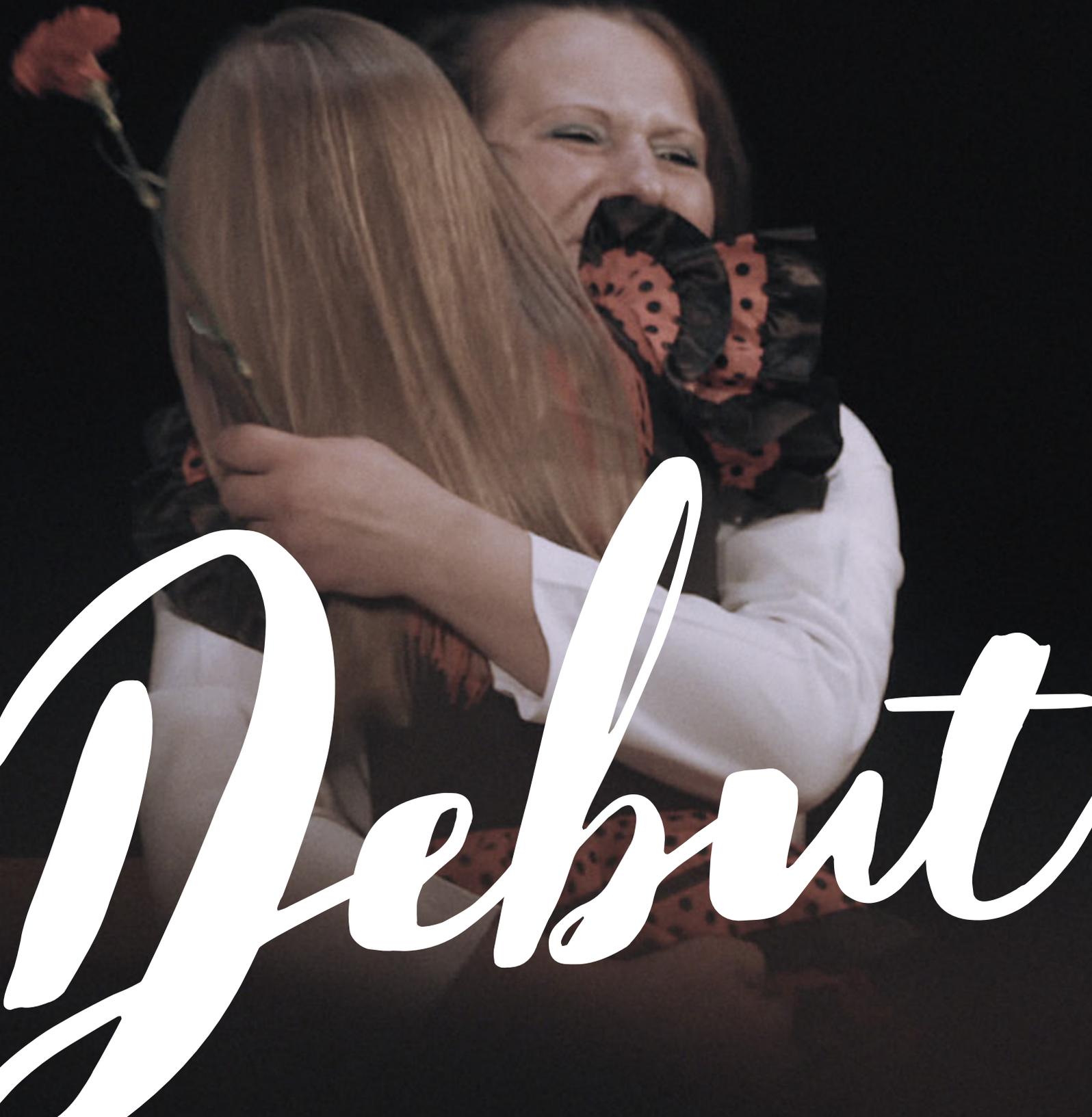


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