

KANTEMIR BALAGOV: A STATEMENT FROM THE DIRECTOR

Beanpole is my second feature film. It is very important to me that my story takes place in 1945. My heroes, like the city they live in, are mangled by a horrible war. They live in a city that has endured one of the worst sieges in the history of warfare. This is a story about them and about people they meet in Leningrad, the obstacles that they have to overcome and the way they are treated by society. They are psychologically crippled by the war and it will take time for them to learn to live their normal lives.

I am interested in the fates of women and especially women who fought in the Second World War. According to data, this was the war with the highest participation of women. As an author, I am interested in finding an answer to the question: what happens to a person who is supposed to give life after she passes through the trials of war?

The film has a particular colour palette. When I started to study the diaries of people who lived during that time, I learned that despite all the hardships and the devastation, they were surrounded by bright colours every day. This conflict between bright colours and the nature of post-war life is also very interesting to me.

The book "The Unwomanly Face of War" by the Nobel Laureate Svetlana Alexievich was my main inspiration for this film. This book opened a whole new world for me. I came to

realize how little I knew about the war and how little I knew about the role of women in the war. And this led me to another thought: what would happen to a woman after the war was over, when there was a tectonic shift in her mind and her nature, a violation of her nature that would obviously take place afterwards.

Leningrad was especially important for me as it was the city that survived this terrible siege, and the consequences of the siege played an important part in the film. It was vital for me to feel this space and background in the film, and you can feel it even now, in today's Leningrad (Saint Petersburg).

We feel the consequences of war in the space where the action takes place, and in the colour palette of the film. But most importantly it's in the fates of our heroes. It was important for me to show the consequences of war through people's faces, eyes, physiques, bodies, not just through abandoned or destroyed buildings.

On a surface level, *Beanpole* is a word that describes the physical attributes and outlook of our main hero, Iya, as she's a very tall woman. But for me *Beanpole* is more about clumsiness and this is how my heroes feel and express feelings in the film – they are clumsy, they are learning how to live again after the war and it is very difficult for them.



KANTEMIR BALAGOV: BIOGRAPHY

Kanemir Balagov was born in Nalchik, Russia, in 1991.

Beanpole marks his second feature film, Balagov having made his directorial debut with *Closeness* (2017), which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in Un Certain Regard and was awarded the FIPRESCI prize.

Balagov graduated from Alexander Sokurov's directing workshop at Kabardino-Balkarian State University in 2015. During his studies, he made a number of fiction and documentary films which took part in various domestic and international events.

Beanpole (2019) has been selected for the 72nd Annual Cannes Film Festival, in Un Certain Regard.