



INTERNATIONAL
HOUSE
PHILADELPHIA

STORIES
FROM
NON-PUTIN
RUSSIA

AUGUST 6 - 27

A SPECIAL
MONTH-LONG
FILM SERIES



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STORIES

FROM

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Next year will mark two-and-a-half decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the start of a new identity for Russia. Leaving behind an era of oligarchs, the country emerged in the 21st century with its super-riches topping the charts of Forbes magazine while its political elite once again began flexing their muscles on the world stage. Remarkably, the state of life for the people of Russian provinces is far away from the ambitions of the center.

This eclectic collection of stunning documentaries, rather than dwelling on political and economic issues, reflects on the psychological impact of the change on Russian people. The idea of the province, the local “neighborhood,” is the focus. Carefully selected films show that although political tendencies of Russian society have often determined social changes, the province only observes and often pays for them.

Many works are produced by regional, non-central studios by filmmakers from the same social strata as their provincial subjects, portraying both a physical and an emotional distance from the “movers and shakers” of urban society. Interestingly, the series demonstrates above all that today’s Russian documentarian inherits a deep sense of the culture and traditions rooted in classical literature, rather than values derived from contemporary cinema and television.



THURSDAY, AUGUST 6 AT 7PM
BLISS

dir. Vitaly Mansky, Russia, 1996, digital, Russian w/ English subtitles, 52 min.

In a deserted village in Central Russia, the only residents who remain are a few elderly women and an old man, yet, there is a baby on the way. Who is the father of the child? His identity is unknown and the townspeople believe that the baby may be a miracle. In the village named "Bliss," everyone waits for the miracle to happen, yet no one notices them happening all the time. *Bliss* is a very entertaining and witty film from an award-winning filmmaker.

followed by

CIVIL STATUS

dir. Alina Rudnitskaya, Russia, 2005, digital, Russian w/ English subtitles, 29 min.

The "Marriage Palace," as it is referred to, is a place where important moments in a person's destiny tangle with the bureaucratic system. The most significant events in people's lives such as weddings, divorces, births and deaths are seen as routine in a registration office.



FRIDAY, AUGUST 7 AT 7PM
FISHERMAN AND THE DANCER

dir. Valeriy Solomin, Russia, 2005, digital, Russian w/ English subtitles, 52 min.

Natalia and Yuri are the keepers of a weather station near Lake Baikal in Siberia. Against the overwhelmingly vast, austere natural landscape, they live with their two children in a cramped house. Natalia, loves dancing and daydreaming, but is worried about her children's future. Yuri, who has always wanted a life of hunting and fishing, realizes there is a price to pay for their isolation. He misses outings to the cinema and the zoo. Sometimes, to dry his wife's tears, the fisherman dances with her in the kitchen. Valeriy Solomin, a veteran of some 30 documentaries, turns his camera on these reclusive people on the shores of the world's deepest lake.

followed by

GRANDMA'S APARTMENT

dir. Andrei Anchugov, Russia, 1990, digital, Russian w/ English subtitles, 20 min.

In a large, industrial city in the Urals, Luba and Marina live in a small apartment, inherited from Marina's grandmother, who recently passed away. Brought together because of financial distresses, both girls try to help each other. They find comfort in their newly found friendship while standing strong against the big and cruel city. While both are busy with their own needs, the girls neglect to bury the ashes of Marina's late grandmother. Each day, they pass the urn, but feel no urgency to honor the memory, or the traditions, of the grandmother.



THURSDAY, AUGUST 13 AT 7PM
LIFE AS IT IS

dir. Marina Razbezhkina, Russia, 2002, digital, Russian w/ English subtitles, 20 min.

Life on a Russian farm continues unchanged. An older woman goes about her daily work. One by one, in black and white, the routine scenes from her life pass by. The people she talks to remain invisible as the camera solely concentrates on the woman against the bleak environment of her surroundings. Poetic and beautiful, *Life As It Is* celebrates Russian women and their complex lives.

followed by

THE HOLIDAYS

dir. Marina Razbezhkina, Russia, 2005, digital, Russian w/ English subtitles, 52 min.

The Mansi children at the boarding school in the small town of Ivdel are waiting impatiently for the winter break. They are eager to return to their native village, where there are no televisions or computer games. It takes a whole day in weather-beaten lorry, through forests and snow-covered plains. Yet nothing is better than home, where you can go sledding, jump off the roof into the snow, or play cards with grandmother in the bleak light of the kerosene lamp all evening long. Witnessing the everyday life of Treskole's villagers, this meditative and attentive film by an award-winning filmmaker carries the viewers across both time and space. The laconic routine is interrupted by accidents that punctuate the predictable passage of time. The self-appointed shaman advises the locals to leave the village as few families can make a living. The holidays are a short break from town life for the children. Will any of them decide to return for good?



SATURDAY, AUGUST 15 AT 7PM
STORIES FROM NON-PUTIN RUSSIA
THE STATION STOP

dir. Sergei Loznitsa, Russia, 2000, digital, Russian w/ English subtitles, 25 min.

Speeding trains disrupt the silence of a small rail station. The whistle of the locomotive and the thunder of the wheels eventually disappear into the night, failing to wake the sleeping people in the station. What do they wait for? What will wake them up?

followed by

THE SETTLEMENT

dir. Sergei Loznitsa, Russia, 2002, digital, Russian w/ English subtitles, 79 min.

The Settlement is a critically acclaimed, visually arresting documentary about a strange community in the Russian countryside, from renowned documentary filmmaker Sergei Loznitsa. A master of detailed, minimalist observation, Loznitsa introduces us to a rural settlement where the residents are seemingly involved in everyday farm work. Yet as we watch the workers, we notice strange inconsistencies in their routines - the wood never appears to be cut, the grain never harvested - and it soon becomes apparent that what we are witnessing is neither a farm nor some sort of labor commune. Gradually, we come to understand the workers, are in fact, patients. Their daily chores, though earnestly performed, serve only therapeutic purposes. *The Settlement* is an exceptional and enigmatic film. Is this a parable of post-Soviet society? Or is it testament to the importance of nature in our modern lives? With a haunting coda that perhaps hints at an answer, *The Settlement* is a film that forces us to consider the world in which we live.



THURSDAY, AUGUST 20 AT 7PM
STORIES FROM NON-PUTIN RUSSIA
VACATION IN NOVEMBER

dir. Pavel Medvedev, Russia, 2002, digital, Russian
w/ English subtitles, 30 min.

The documentaries of Pavel Medvedev are haunting portraits of some of post-Soviet Russia's most isolated people and places. This film follows Russian miners in the tundra. On a forced furlough from their regular jobs, they embark on an annual massive reindeer slaughter to supplement their income.

followed by

YAPTIK-HASSE

dir. Edgar Bartenev, Russia, 2006, digital, color, Russian w/ English subtitles, 32 min.

The film tells the story of the Yaptiks, the nomad Nenet's family, who reside on Yamal Peninsula. Their main occupation is reindeer breeding. The most simple and ordinary events are driven by the ancient philosophy that is passed from one generation to another through the centuries. "Yaptik-hasse" is believed to be a spirit of the Yaptik family; thus he goes around on the sacred sledge that is pulled by a reindeer or dogs. Road is his home. As long as he keeps his wonders, there will always be a deer, a dog and the fellow Nenets. Edgar Bartenev equally uses three different means to tell the story of the breathtaking everyday life of these Siberian nomads: original music, creative inter-titles, and last but not least, a magnificent camera work. *Yaptik-Hasse* is a rare and unique little film, not to be missed.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21 AT 7PM
STORIES FROM NON-PUTIN RUSSIA
BROADWAY, BLACK SEA

dir. Vitali Mansky, Czech Republic, Germany, Russia, 2001, digital, Russian w/ English subtitles, 78 min.

Broadway, Black Sea presents a kaleidoscopic portrait of a Black Sea resort over the course of one holiday season. Largely devoid of authorial comment or exposition, the filmmakers are content to simply glide around the campsites, beaches, and fairgrounds, capturing the diverse sights and sounds on display.

followed by

COUNTRYSIDE 35X45

dir. Evgeny Solomin, Russia, 2009, digital, Russian
w/ English subtitles, 43 min.

Photographer Lyutikov travels in Siberian villages photographing people, for the authorities have decided to replace old Soviet passports with new Russian ones. He shoots men in front of a sheet nailed to a barn wall and hangs the sheet in the village hall for women. In Russia, a person without a passport isn't really a person; you can't even buy a train ticket. Then again, if you haven't been paid in eight years, where would you go?



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26 AT 7PM
STORIES FROM NON-PUTIN RUSSIA
MUMMIES

dir. Alexander Rastorguev, Russia, 2001, digital, Russian w/ English subtitles, 52 min.

A funny and tragic portrait of Russian history is reflected in a life story of Julia, the main character of the film, and her family as in a drop of water. The story of an adrift family living in a barrack, between extreme poverty and alcoholism. In this difficult context, a child will be born.

followed by

TINY KATERINA

dir. Ivan Golovnev, Russia, 2004, digital, Russian w/ English subtitles, 25 min.

Before *Babies*, Ivan Golovnev captured the life of a small Khanty girl, Katerina. She observes and understands a world outside her own while still a toddler between the ages of 2 and 4. Gradually, Katerina begins to sense the unknown as it comes ever closer; not far from her nomad camp an oil rig appears. Witty and charming, this little film will steal your heart.

WHO MOWS AT NIGHT?

dir. Gerasim Degal'tsev, Soviet Union, 1990, digital, Russian w/ English subtitles, 20 min.

Vasily has just turned 70. He lives alone on his little farm following the same routine day after day. Vasily is blind, and for him, everything in the world seems the same - same landscape, same people, same cows and the same rain falling down everyday. The film presents an outstanding depiction of a simple but extraordinary man.



THURSDAY, AUGUST 27 AT 7PM
STORIES FROM NON-PUTIN RUSSIA
FLIGHT OF THE
BUMBLEBEE

dir. Yury Schiller, Russia, 1998, digital, Russian w/ English subtitles, 30 min.

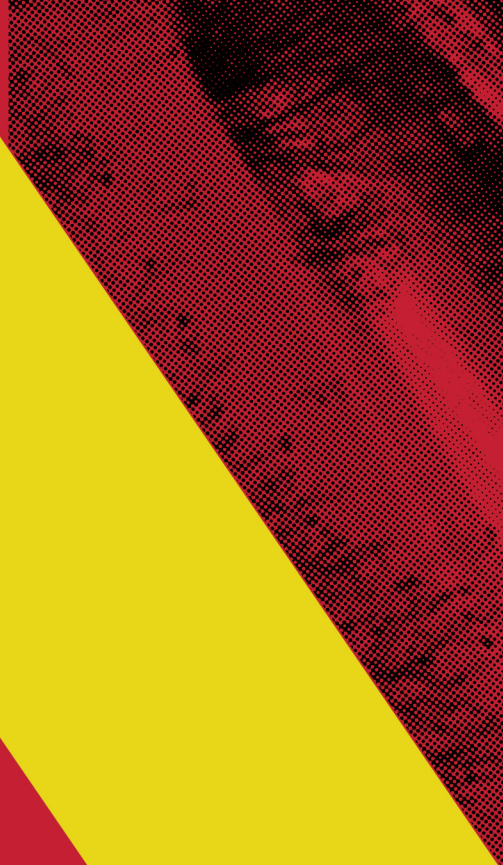
Lenya lives in a village in Siberia. He is only 6, but already senses a new Russia. He lives with the desire for freedom, a passion for change, and contempt for Revolution. However, his character is complex. A typical Russian, he is torn between a craving for revolution and the safety of conformism.

followed by

I WAS GOING HOME...

dir. Lyudmila Ulanova, Russia, 1991, digital, Russian w/ English subtitles, 60 min.

Nataliya decides to go back home to Novosibirsk where she has left her 6-year-old son with her parents. Her lifestyle in Moscow is vastly different than that of her hometown but she is hesitant to return. The film offers a delicate and moving portrait of a Russian woman torn between her ambition for change and her nostalgia for the familiar.



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