



18th Minsk International Film Festival concludes with dazzling award ceremony

Listapad Festival held for 18th time as part of cultural autumn

Minsk's International Film Festival remains one of the most representative within our post-Soviet space

By Valery Petrovsky

Listapad is the last major film festival of the cinematic year, bringing together winners and entrants of various international festivals. This year, the 18th *Listapad* Festival saw the screening of films from 38 countries around the world. Famous director Andrey Zvyagintsev contributed his outstanding *Elena*, set apart from the competition, and shared his professional secrets with Belarusian colleagues.

"There's only one piece of advice I have for you; don't try to make money from cinema. As a rule, today's producers aren't interested in their films gaining long lived popularity, which is not a good ethos to have. Unfortunately, they are more interested in making some fast money; to me, they aren't film directors, as they have no regard for the soul. They don't search down deep for their characters."

This year, the festival's motto was 'Eyes Wide Open' — implying that audiences should see all the films being screened in Minsk.

Of course, time doesn't stand still. Over the past 18 years, *Listapad* has grown, becoming an 'A' class festival. It still follows its major aim as 'a festival of festivals' for ordinary film lovers rather than specialists. It shows the best of world cinematography in recent years, including favourites from the CIS, Baltic States, and Central and Eastern Europe. The forum's jury changes from year to year and directors are given the chance to speak directly to audiences after each screening.

Listapad was unable to choose a worthy Belarusian film for the contest this year: a mature and sensible decision where a great masterpiece is lacking. Instead, Belarus was represented well in the documentary

and children film nominations.

"Over these years, the festival has moved to a completely different level," notes popular actress Svetlana Kozhemyakina, not hiding her emotions. "I remember, as a student, going to Minsk's Oktyabr Cinema to see competitive screenings. A group of inspirational enthusiasts organised the event and it seemed impossible that a true festival would be possible in autumn in Minsk. We have no sea or palm

trees but *Listapad* has something different: warmth, comfort and joy at human communication. You can't buy these qualities."

Irina Norbekova, an actress with the Theatre Studio of Film Actors, agrees, adding, "Everyone always looks forward to our cinema forum. For us, actors, it's another professional holiday. We like to see new films and young talent coming through to replace the older generation. I believe that, sooner or later, new national cinema will appear, worthy of the names of Turov, Dobrolyubov, Chetverikov and Ptashuk. Once, Belarusian film produced great films. I acted in many of them and they endure in people's memory. We should maintain this reputation."

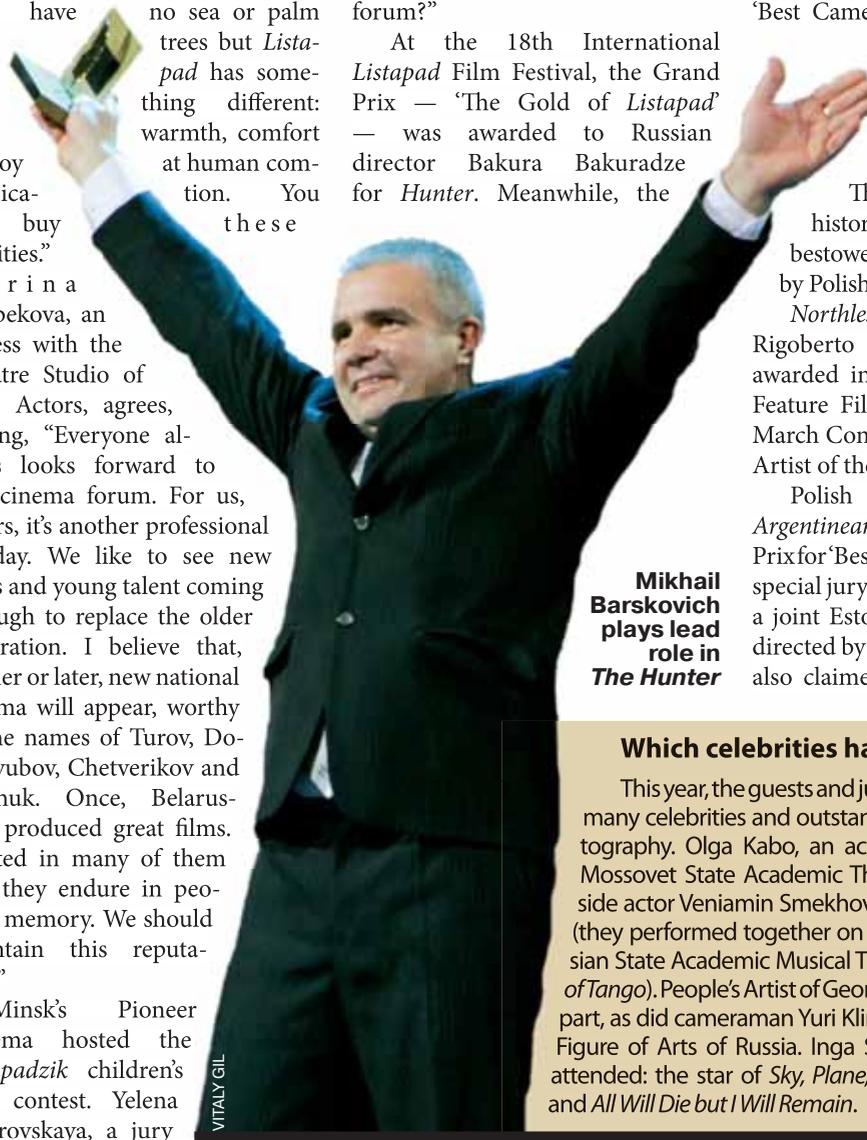
Minsk's Pioneer Cinema hosted the *Listapad* children's film contest. Yelena Dubrovskaya, a jury

member and actress, notes, "The fact that *Listapad* hasn't disappeared from the cinematic map, despite all difficulties, but has expanded its borders, is a cause for joy. The programme was impressive, so the work of the jury was exciting and intensive. The fiction films submitted were wonderful although somewhat controversial, making audiences ponder and sympathise. Isn't this the major goal of any cinematic forum?"

At the 18th International *Listapad* Film Festival, the Grand Prix — 'The Gold of *Listapad*' — was awarded to Russian director Bakura Bakuradze for *Hunter*. Meanwhile, the



Galina Adamovich bestowed with Presidential Prize



Mikhail Barskovich plays lead role in *The Hunter*

Which celebrities have visited Minsk

This year, the guests and jury members comprised many celebrities and outstanding figures of cinematography. Olga Kabo, an actress and prima of the Mossovet State Academic Theatre joined us, alongside actor Veniamin Smekhov and his daughter Alika (they performed together on the stage of the Belarusian State Academic Musical Theatre in *Twelve Months of Tango*). People's Artist of Georgia Kakhi Kavsadze took part, as did cameraman Yuri Klimenko — an Honoured Figure of Arts of Russia. Inga Strelkova-Oboldina also attended: the star of *Sky, Plane, Girl; It Doesn't Hurt Me; and All Will Die but I Will Remain*.

Presidential Prize 'For Humanism and Spirituality in Cinema' was given to *The Nun*, by Belarusian film director Galina Adamovich, recognising her contribution to promoting humanitarian, spiritual and moral issues via the artistic medium of film.

The international jury named *White-White World's* Oleg Novković, from Serbia, 'Best Director' while Ivan Gudkov was recognised for 'Best Camera Work' in *There Was Never a Better Brother* (a joint Azerbaijani-Russian-Bulgarian project, directed by Murad Ibragimbekov).

The jury's special prize for historical dramatisation was bestowed upon *Black Thursday*, by Polish director Antoni Krauze.

Northless (directed by Mexican Rigoberto Pérezcano) has been awarded in the category 'For Best Feature Film of the Youth on the March Contest named after People's Artist of the USSR Victor Turov'.

Polish Wojciech Staron's *Argentinean Lesson* took the Grand Prix for 'Best Documentary' while the special jury prize went to *Pit No. 8* — a joint Estonian-Ukrainian project, directed by Marianna Kaat. *The Nun* also claimed a diploma 'For Vivid

Portrayal of the Human Spiritual Path'. *Is There a Theatre?* by Georgia's Nana Dzhanelidze was awarded 'For Visual Cinematographic Solution' and *The Victory's* Alexander Kuprin, from Russia, was recognised in the 'Victory over Onselef' nomination.

Kyrgyzstan's Alijan Nasirov won 'Best Young Director of a Documentary' for his *Cattle Camp* while *Loading My Life*, by Armenia's director Harut Shatyan, claimed a diploma 'For Search and Risk'. The *Bell Ringer*, by Belarus' Yekaterina Makhova, was awarded 'For Faith to Traditions'. *The Other Chelsea. A Story from Donetsk*, by German Jakob Preuss, won 'Best Publicistic Film' while *The Last Day of Summer*, by Polish Piotr Stasik, showed best 'Mastery'.

The international jury gave 'The Silver of *Listapad*' in the 'Film as Art Phenomenon' nomination to *Mothers*, by Macedonian director Milcho Manchevski. Marta Honzatko was honoured for 'Best Actress' in *Black Thursday*, by Polish Antoni Krauze. Kakhi Kavsadze, who played himself in *Is There a Theatre?*, was given the prize for 'Best Actor'. Female duo Hana Selimovic and Jasna Djuricic, in *White-White World*, won 'Best Supporting Actresses' while the men in *Chapiteau Show*, by Russia's Sergey Loban, took 'Best Supporting Actors'.

The People's Choice Award — 'The Bronze of *Listapad*' — was calculated from votes cast by audiences, with *Poll Diaries*, a German-Estonian film directed by Chris Kraus, winning. Yelena Turova's *Ryzhik in Wonderland*, which has already won awards at festivals abroad, was given a special prize 'For Developing the Traditions of Fairy Tales in Cinema via Contemporary Technologies'.