

The Competitors

Russia's Wonder Children II

A Film by Irene Langemann

Фильм Ирены Лангеманн

КОНКУРЕНТЫ Вундеркинды России II



The film "COMPETITORS" tells a universal tale of success and failure in the world of classical music. Approaching the four protagonists very closely and combined with moving flashbacks from the film "Russia's Wonder Children", it is a poetical study with a deeply human touch of four young people growing up under the severe pressure of a just about inhumane competitive strife.

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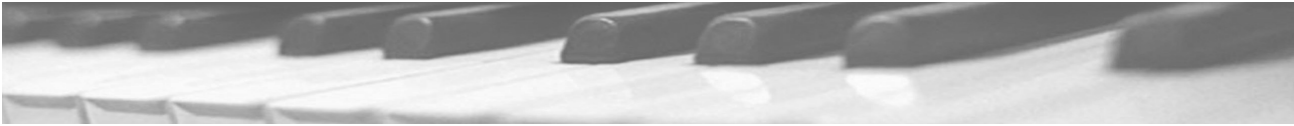
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The Film

At the age of seventeen, Irina Chistyakova looks back at an international concert career spanning ten years. Irina is the youngest of the four protagonists of the film „Russia's Wonder Children“ made in 2000. By now seventeen years old, she is going through the drama which many child prodigies experience: While they were children, they were able to stun audiences with the contrast of their delicate appearances and precocious talents.

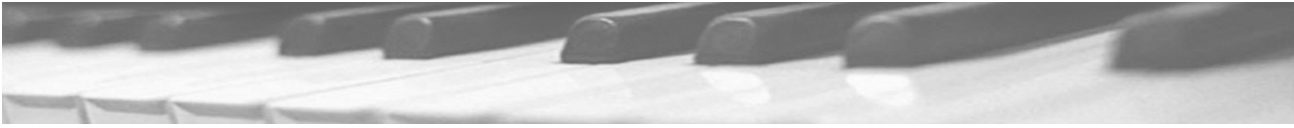
Now only a perfectly accomplished performance matters. Now they have become COMPETITORS in the merciless music industry. They all want to get right to the top - but it is tough scaling the dizzy heights to the top of the piano-players' Olympus. And there's only space for a handful of piano virtuosos up there. Like Irina, Nikita Mndoyants, 18, Dmitry Krutogolovy, 19, and Elena Kolesnichenko, 25, are still showered with praise and distinction. But what price did they have to pay for it? Did a barely experienced childhood leave its marks on their psyche? Irina has already had her share of backache, tendinitis and neuritis. Is the constant physical exertion by endless daily practise sessions really justifiable? If they want to become concert pianists, it is inevitable. The pain - both physical and psychological - is a daily companion and must be overcome somehow. And it is incredibly difficult to add something new, refreshing, something of one's own to the international reservoir of piano ideas.

The film "COMPETITORS" tells a universal tale of success and failure in the world of classical music. Approaching the four protagonists very closely and combined with moving flashbacks from the film "Russia's Wonder Children", it will become a poetical study with a deeply human touch of four young people growing up under the severe pressure of a just about inhumane competitive strife.



The new film THE COMPETITORS – RUSSIAS WONDER CHILDREN 2 has been supported so far by: RBB/ARTE, WDR, CZ-TV, ERR, NPS, SF, TVP1, Filmstiftung NRW, MBB.DFFF und MEDIA

Format: 35 mm
Sound: Dolby Digital
Length: 98 min.
Shooting: HDCam 25p
Theatrical release in Germany



Protagonists



Elena Kolesnitschenko

Irina Tschistjakowa

Dmitri Krutogolov

Nikita Mndoyants

Und Enrique Bátiz, Andrej Ovchinnikov, Michael Russ

Dmitri Krutogolov:

I'm often told I had a wasted childhood, slaving away and not being allowed to play in the playground. How do I respond to that? Playing the piano is also playing.

Nikita Mndoyants:

A musician's personality isn't only shaped by the world of music which he always inhabits. The places that he frequents are also important. Spiritual places... These impressions will be inspiring for many years to come.

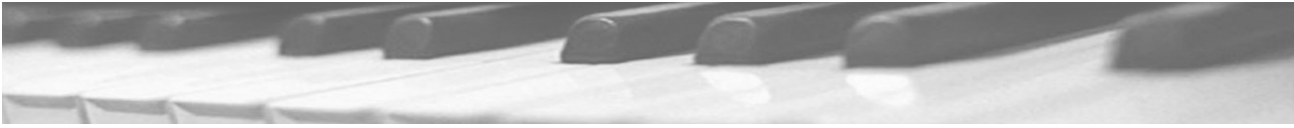
Elena Kolesnitschenko:

I've been in Germany for ten years. I was sceptical at first. I was a star in Moscow, and everything changed abruptly here. I started living as an adult without my mother. Then I was married and a mother.

It's hard to forge a career and find a good manager. The competition among musicians is enormous, especially among pianists. Few people make it to the top.

Irina Tschistjakowa:

Do I feel lonely at the piano? Quite the opposite. Even when I'm playing the saddest and most melancholic music. I feel lonely without the piano. But never at the piano. I have a special relationship with this instrument. Some people call pianos furniture. Unbelievable! It's a true friend who can understand and express everything. It treats me just the way I treat it.



Credits

Written and directed by:

Irene Langemann

Camera:

Maxim Tarasjugin, Dieter Stürmer

Sound:

Alexander Iwanow, Rafael Tyblewski

Camera assistant:

Ilia Podgaetskiy

Line Producer Moskau:

Tatjana Petrik

Editor:

Kawe Vakil

Commissioning Editors:

Dagmar Mielke /RBB/ARTE, Birgit Mehler /RBB

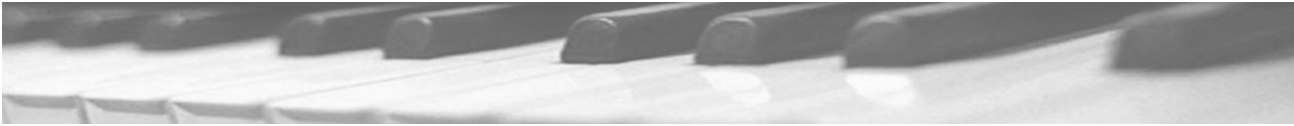
Producer:

Wolfgang Bergmann

Founded by: Filmstiftung NRW, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, DFFF, MEDIA

A Co-Production of LICHTFILM with RBB, EinsFestival in Cooperation with ARTE und NPS

2010

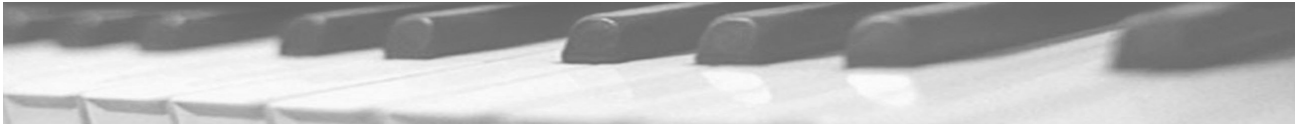


Filmography of Irene Langemann



Born in Issilkul, near Omsk, in what was then the Soviet Union, **Irene Langemann** majored in acting and German language and literature at Moscow's Tcepkina Drama School 1980. For the next ten years she worked as an actress, director and playwright in Moscow. In 1983 she became a presenter for Russian television. 1990 she emigrated to Germany. From then until 1996 she was commissioning editor at Deutsche Welle-tv in Cologne. Now she is freelancing filmmaker.

- 1993 **Rooted nowhere**
Documentary, director and author, 30 min. DW
- 1994 **The Gods I ask for a change** 30 min. DW, Documentary, director and author
Together with Frauke Sandig,
Festivals: "Message to Man" in St. Petersburg 1994
- 1995/96 **Empire of Dreams - The Bolshoi Ballet between Myth and Reality**
Documentary, director and author, 60 min. for MDR/WDR/arte
- 1997 **See you in Berlin**
Screenplay for a cinema fiction, funded by Filmförderung Hamburg and BMI.
- 1999 **Humboldt's Next Generation**
Documentary, director and author, 77 and 30 min. WDR/3sat/, DW
- 1998-2000 **Russia's Wonder Children**
Documentary, director and author 98/60 min.
WDR/arte, Filmstiftung NW, Format – 35 mm
Festivals: 50. Int. Forum of new Cinema - Berlinale 2000; DocAviv - Israel 2000; 15. Int. Dokumentarfilm Festival - München; Docfest - New York 2000; 13. International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam 2000;
Hot Docs Toronto 2002
Awards: 2001 Golden Gate Competition San Francisco – Merit Winner in Category 1. The Arts



- 2001 **Lale Andersen – The voice of Lili Marleen**
Documentary, director and author, 90/60, 2x25 min. WDR, NDR,
DW, Filmbüro NW
Festivals: Golden Chest - Plovdiv/Bulgaria; New German Films- Museum of
Modern Art N.Y.; Nordic Film Days – Lübeck/Germany; IDFA Amsterdam 2001,
Awards: Grand Prix for the best foreign documentary - Golden Chest Bulgaria
- 2003 **Martins' Passion**
Documentary, director and author, 96 min.
Filmstiftung NRW, ARTE G.E.I.E, WDR, YLE, NPS
Festivals: FIPA 2004 Biarritz/France; "It's all true" Sao Paulo/Brazil; Philadelphia
Film Festival/USA; Int. Doc. Festival – Munich/Germany; Golden Prague/Check
Republic; Banff Television Festival/Canada; „Message to Man“ St. Petersburg/Russia;
Pocono Mountain Film Festival/USA; Montreal Festival "New Cinema"/Canada;
Chicago International Documentary Festival 2005; Brazil2005 Festival, Tampla
Awards: FIPA D'OR Biarritz; Banff Rockie Award (Canada); Price "Centaur" for the Best
documentary St. Petersburg; Best Documentary – Pocono Mountains Film Festival USA
- 2004 **Ice and Oranges**
Documentary, director and author, 88 min. ARTE G.E.I.E.
- 2005 **Goldap – In Poland's Siberia**
Documentary, director and author, 60 min. ARTE G.E.I.E., TVP
- 2007 **Rublyovka – Road to Bliss**
Documentary, director and author, 94 min. Filmstiftung NRW, ARTE, RBB, WDR
Festivals: International Filmfest Munich, 2007; Viennale/Vienna; Kasseler
Documentary- and Videofest; Golden Chest Festival, Bulgaria; Guangzhou
Documentary Filmfestival, China; Festival Tertio Millennio Rom; Göteborg
International Film Festival; Human Rights Film Festival - Zagreb; Maysles Brothers
Award - Belfast; Sguardi Altrove - Milan; **Minneapolis/St. Paul Int. Film Fest, USA;**
Planet Doc Review Warsaw; Human Rights Festival, Kiev, 2009

Awards: Viennale Standard Reader's Jury Award; Prize for direction of Photography,
Golden Chest; Best Documentary - Sguardi Altrove, Milan; Nomination for the Grimme
Preis 2009 Germany; "Prix Circom" Section- "International", European TV-Award



Blood and Honey – Europe without frontiers

Documentary, director and author, 92 Min., ZDF/ARTE

2008

Liverpool – Beat City

Documentary, director and author, 60 Min., ZDF/ARTE

2009

From Ramstein with Love

Documentary, director and author, 89 Min. SWR/WDR/DW-tv

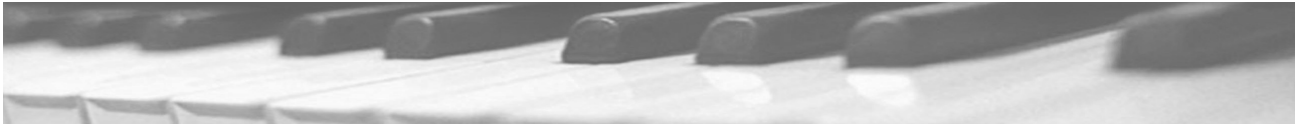
Festivals: International Filmfest Munich 2009; New Cinema from Germany, Museum of Modern Art, New York 2010

2010

The Competitors – Russia’s Wonder Children II

Documentary, director and author, 98 Min. RBB/ARTE NPS

Filmstiftung NRW, MEDIA, Medienboard, DFFF



„Russias Wonder Children“ had the Premiere in 2000



Elena Kolesnitschenko

Nikita Mndoyants

Dmitri Krutogolov

Irina Tschistjakowa

The Film

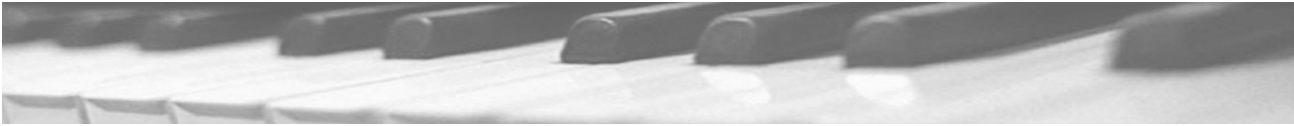
Their names are Lena, Nikita, Ira and Mitya. They excel at concert performances which would shatter the nerves of even adult pianists. Their vibratos, runs and cascading arpeggios are simply breathtaking. The maturity these children display, even when performing the most difficult of piano pieces, is quite astonishing. Their amazing talent is founded, however, on hours of practice every single day and is the result of a long-standing tradition in the erstwhile Soviet Union. The roots of this tradition date back to the thirties. In the midst of Stalin's reign of terror, music education was elevated to the status of an important state mission. Since then, no other country has produced as many virtuoso musicians as Russia. This was also the time when the Central Music School at the Moscow Conservatory first opened its portals. Even today, it remains the most sought after institution to attend in order to obtain a musical education. Ira, Mitya, Nikita and Lena are all pupils at this school. Lena, who has been performing concerts all over the world since she was nine years old, does not even possess her own piano on which to practice. Lena is now seventeen and is experiencing the fate of many a child prodigy: no longer a child, she is simply not as sought after as she used to be. There are, after all, so many first class adult musicians around.

Festivals: Berlinale 2000, DocAviv - Tel Aviv , Int. Münchner Dokumentarfilmfest
Docfest, New York, DFA

Awards: Golden Gate Merit Award, Kategorie Arts, 2001

A coproduction by Lichtfilm Wolfgang Bergmann with WDR and ARTE. Supported by Filmstiftung NRW and MEDIA Development and TV-Distribution.

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PRESS REVIEWS about the first „Russias Wonderchilds “

A film marked by the love of music and affection for the young artists. **Kölnische Rundschau - Cologne**

A remarkably sensual film and very close to the subject. **Zitty - Berlin**

Sergej Astachovs cameraworks approaches them through a gentle approach, like walking on tiptoes. **Der Schnitt - Bochum**

Tremendous talent is meeting enormous industry and diligence, the only concentration on music, and sure exceptional teachers. **FonoForum-Euskirchen**

Little girls with big ribbon in the hair are hunting their hands in breathtaking rate on the keys. **TIP Berlin**

Thanks to the author we find out, that they simply aren't „Wunderkinder“ but young people, who work very hard and miss out on a lot of things. **Filmecho**

The film doesn't only portrait the less beautiful sides of Russian everybody-life, but emphasizes the fact, that there are these talents in Russia, and that they are successful who enrapture the world. **Evropa Centr - Berlin**

A film about little music geniuses. **StadtRevue - Cologne**

The film is also a document of another Russia, the Russia of the theatre, literature and the arts. **Choices - Cologne**

The picture shown are fascinating, and frightening at once. **030 - Berlin**

Irene Langemann is showing with the help of wonderful music – the difficulties of a genius to stand his ground and survive economically. **Cinema 10/2000**

A film, clear in its format, shot with a foraful impressive camera. **Russkij Berlin**

Impressive sequences, showing the energy necessary to cultivate extraordinary talent. **Berlin Ticket**

The film is doing away with the legend of talented Russian children earning millions for their relatives... the film is making it clear to which extent these highly talented children are particularly at risk. **Filmdienst**

The question arises where people living in such misery take the energy to perform such exceptional art. **Berlin Live**

Atmospheric pictures of children and their instruments, both at home and in the streets of Moscow, clearing away lots of prejudices. **City-guide.de**

The story of the „Wunderkinder“ is at the same time one of the many stories of the decline of state institutions in Russia. **Berliner Zeitung**