

OPENS AT FILM FORUM NEW YORK MAY 16



ELENA
A film by Andrey Zvyagintsev

Booking Contact:

Clemence Taillandier, Zeitgeist Films
201-736-0261 • clemence@zeitgeistfilms.com

Marketing Contacts and National Publicity:

Nancy Gerstman & Emily Russo, Zeitgeist Films
212-274-1989 • nancy@zeitgeistfilms.com • emily@zeitgeistfilms.com

Publicity Contacts, New York:

Susan Norget & Charlie Olsky, Susan Norget Film Promotion
212-431-0090 • susan@norget.com • charlie@norget.com

A ZEITGEIST FILMS RELEASE

ELENA

A film by Andrey Zvyagintsev

Winner of Cannes' Un Certain Regard Special Jury Prize, *Elena* is a gripping, modern twist on the classic noir thriller. Sixty-ish spouses Vladimir and Elena uneasily share his palatial Moscow apartment—he's a still-virile, wealthy businessman; she's his dowdy former nurse who has clearly "married up." Estranged from his own wild-child daughter, Vladimir openly despises his wife's freeloading son and family. But when a sudden illness and an unexpected reunion threaten the dutiful housewife's potential inheritance, she must hatch a desperate plan.... Masterfully crafted by award-winning Russian filmmaker Andrey Zvyagintsev (Golden Globe nominee *The Return*) and featuring evocative, Hitchcockian music by Philip Glass, *Elena* is a subtly stylish exploration of crime, punishment and human nature.

AWARDS

WINNER
SPECIAL JURY PRIZE
CANNES FILM FESTIVAL
UN CERTAIN REGARD

WINNER
BEST FEATURE FILM
BEST DIRECTOR
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER
BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS
GOLDEN EAGLE AWARDS
RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURES

WINNER
GRAND PRIZE FOR BEST FILM
GHENT FILM FESTIVAL

WINNER
BEST DIRECTOR
BEST ACTRESS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY
DURBAN FILM FESTIVAL

WINNER
BEST ACTRESS
FESTIVAL NOUVEAU CINEMA MONTREAL

WINNER
BEST ACTRESS
SEVILLE FILM FESTIVAL

WINNER
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY
BELY KVADRAT (WHITE SQUARE)
CINEMATOGRAPHY AWARDS
MOSCOW

NOMINEE
BEST ACTRESS
EUROPEAN FILM AWARDS

Director's Statement

I'm thrilled by the chance this story provides to explore the central idea of the early modern period: survival of the fittest, survival at any cost. With the growth of individual freedoms, society requires a corresponding growth of solidarity. Ever-increasing disengagement and individualism mean that people start to behave more and more like a bunch of tarantulas in a jar. This will be a rough drama — a pitiless, uncompromising look at human nature.

We see two old people who have what appears to be an entirely normal relationship. You could even say that these people love each other, though it's not a passionate, youthful kind of love. We see their mutual care, gentleness and tact, which, along with their dedication and fairness, persuade us that they are bound by a lasting love.

However, if we choose to call the illusion of a commercial relationship "love" then, in a moment of crisis, individuals will always act first and foremost in their own interests.

As far as the form or the time flow is concerned, I see this film as a fast, intense ride that spirals around the central event — Elena's decision to kill. Up to that point we see a gentle, sweet, feminine woman, full of love and care — at the climax we see a monster, barely recognizable as the character for whom we felt such empathy. From that point onward, time ends its mad dash and moves towards the finale like a person realizing the mechanistic nature and fundamental meaninglessness of everything around them.

This is a drama for today, told in a modern cinematographic language subjecting the viewer to eternal questions about life and death.

A monster disguised as a saint, a repenting sinner facing her idols in a temple — how is that for an image of the Apocalypse?

The Devil is powerless when he stands before the face of God. Man is powerless in the face of Death. And God is powerless in the face of Man's freedom of choice. Humanity holds the key to the future of this trinity.

—Andrey Zvyagintsev

The Cast

Nadezhda Markina – Elena

Born in 1959, Nadezhda Markina hails from Tambov Region in western Russia. She graduated from the Lunacharsky State Institute for Theatre Arts in 1983 and honed her craft at the Taganka Theatre and Malaya Bronnaya Theatre between 1992 and 1998. Her diverse roles included Regan in Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Elizaveta Epanchina in a trilogy based on Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* (both at the Malaya Bronnaya). Her performance as Tamara in Volodin's *Five Evenings* won her the Golden Mask for best actress in 1998. She has also performed at the Moscow Art Theatre and at the Gogol Theatre, where she worked on a production of Vasily Sigarev's *Black Milk*. *Elena* is her first major film role.

Andrey Smirnov – Vladimir

Born in Moscow in 1941, Andrey Smirnov graduated from the directing department at VGIK in 1962 (class of Mikhail Romm). He is a director, playwright and actor. As a film director he is best known for the movies *Angel* (1967), *Belarus Station* (1973) and *Autumn* (1974). He has acted in more than 20 films and TV series and has won prizes at several film festivals including IFF in Karlovy Vary (1990, Best Actor). He was a member of the jury at the 38th Berlin International Film Festival in 1988 and at the Venice Film Festival in 1989.

Yelena Lyadova – Katerina

Born in 1980 in Morshansk in the Tambov Region. After graduating from the Shepkin Theatre Higher College in Moscow, she began her career performing with the Young Spectators Moscow Theatre. She made her film debut playing the role of Rima in *Dreaming of Space* (directed by Alexei Uchitel). One of her notable theatre roles was that of Stella in a production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Alexey Rozin – Sergey

Born in 1978, Alexey Rozin graduated from the theatre school of MkhAT (Moscow Art Theatre). He began his career in the Moscow Art Theatre. Since 2003 he has worked in the Russian Academic Youth Theatre, and played several roles in films and on TV.

The Filmmakers

Andrey Zvyagintsev: Director/Co-Writer

Andrey Zvyagintsev was born in 1964 in Novosibirsk, Siberia. After graduating in 1990 from the acting department of Russian Academy of Theatre Arts (GITIS), where he studied under Eugene Lazarev, Andrey went on to act in independent theatre, TV and film.

In 2000 he made his directorial debut with three episodes for television's *The Black Room*.

He has won over 40 prestigious international awards for his films. His first feature, *The Return*, won the Golden Lion and the Lion of the Future for Best Directorial Debut at the 2003 Venice Film Festival and was nominated for a Golden Globe. The film was sold to 75 countries. His second feature, *The Banishment*, premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2007 and earned Konstantin Lavronenko the Palme d'Or for Best Leading Actor, the first ever for a Russian actor. *Elena*, his latest film, won the Special Jury Prize in the Un Certain Regard section of the 2011 Cannes Film Festival, among many other awards.

Filmography

2000 "Bushidō", "Obscure", "Choice" (three episodes, *The Black Room*)

2003 *The Return*

2007 *The Banishment*

2009 "Apocrypha" (an unused segment for the feature film *New York, I Love You*)

2011 *Elena*

Mikhail Krichman: Director of Photography

Mikhail Krichman was born in Moscow in 1967. He has worked with Andrey Zvyagintsev on all his films, starting with the television series *The Black Room*. Krichman has won numerous awards for excellence in cinematography, including the Best Cinematography Award at Belgrade IFF (Serbia); the Russian Film Critics "Golden Aires"; the Russian Film Academy "Golden Eagle" and the Russian Film Academy "Nika" for Best Cinematography for *The Return*. He was nominated for the European Film Award for Best Cinematography for *The Banishment* and won the "Ozella" prize for Best Cinematography for *Silent Souls* at the 2010 Venice Film Festival.

Oleg Negin: Co-Writer

Born in Moscow in 1970, Oleg Negin co-wrote (together with Andrey Zvyagintsev) the scripts for *The Banishment* and *Elena*. He has also published several novels distinguished by their combination of profound symbolism, cruel realism and elements of post-modernism.

Alexander Rodnyansky: Producer

Alexander Rodnyansky is a Russian producer and media executive. He is the founder of the Ukrainian TV-channel 1+1 and the former CEO of CTC Media. Under his leadership, CTC Media became the biggest independent publicly traded media conglomerate in Russia, with five channels in three countries and a market capitalization over \$4 billion. Rodnyansky has produced over 20 TV series and more than 30 films, including *East/West*, *A Chef in Love*, *Driver for Vera*, *The 9th Company*, *The Sun*, *Heat*, *Piter FM*, *The Inhabited Island*, *Innocent Saturday* and *Elena*. Rodnyansky's films have been selected for the leading film festivals of Europe, and two were nominated for the Academy Award as Best Foreign Language films.

Sergey Melkumov: Producer

Born 1962, Sergey Melkumov graduated from Baku Polytechnic Institute in 1983. He has produced over 30 feature films and television series including the 2005 hit *The 9th Company* (a war drama by Fyodor Bondarchuk), and the award winning *Our Own* by Dmitry Meskhiev. Melkumov has also produced popular Russian TV series like *Lethal Force*, *Saboteur*, and *Brezhnev*. He has won numerous awards for his work from the Russian Academy of Film and various film institutions and festivals.

Non-Stop Productions / AR Films

Elena was produced through Non-Stop Production – a part of Alexander Rodnyansky's AR Films. AR Films was established in 2009. It includes Non-Stop Production; the independent film distributor Cinema Without Borders; one of the biggest film licensing and distribution corporations in Europe: A Company; and runs the annual Russian Open Film Festival Kinotavr.

ELENA

A film by **Andrey Zvyagintsev**

CAST

ELENA **NADEZHDA MARKINA**
VLADIMIR **ANDREY SMIRNOV**
KATERINA **ELENA LYADOVA**
SERGEY **ALEXEY ROZIN**
TATYANA **EVGENIA KONUSHKINA**
SASHA **IGOR OGURTSOV**
LAWYER **VASILY MICHKIV**
VITEK **ALEXEY MASLODUDOV**

CREW

DIRECTED BY **ANDREY ZVYAGINTSEV**
WRITTEN BY **OLEG NEGIN & ANDREY ZVYAGINTSEV**
PRODUCERS **ALEXANDER RODNYANSKY, SERGEY MELKUMOV**
LINE PRODUCER **EKATERINA MARAKULINA**
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY **MIKHAIL KRICHMAN**
SCRIPT SUPERVISED BY **MARIA SHULGINA**
CASTING BY **ELINA TERNYEVA**
PRODUCTION DESIGN BY **VASILY GRITSKOV, VALERIY ZHUKOV**
ART DIRECTION BY **ANDREY PONKRATOV, MAXIM KORSAKOV**
SET DECORATION BY **ANDREY GRACHEV, SASHA LOZOVSKY VICTORIA KUDINOVA, INNA SALTIKOVA**
MAKE-UP DEPARTMENT **GALYA PONOMAREVA, ELENA DMITRIENKO**
COSTUME DESIGN BY **ANNA BARTULI, NASTIA VISHNEVSKAYA, TATYANA CHERNYAKOVA**
EDITING **ANNA MASS**
SOUND DEPARTMENT **ANDREY DERGACHEV, STAS KRECHKOV**
ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENT **PAVEL GORIN, RUSTAM ALIKULOV ANDREY LETSIN,
YULIA MIKHAILOVA TATYANA KROTOVA**

THE FILM FEATURES MUSIC FROM **PHILIP GLASS'S 1995 SYMPHONY NO. 3**

RUSSIA – 2011 – 109 MINS - 35 MM - SCOPE 2.35 – DOLBY DIGITAL



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247 CENTRE ST • 2ND FL • NEW YORK • NY 10013
www.zeitgeistfilms.com • mail@zeitgeistfilms.com
(212) 274-1989 • FAX (212) 274-1644