

if you don't dare, you'll never know

stop • zemlia

a film by KATERYNA GORNOSTAI

written & directed by
KATERYNA GORNOSTAI

cinematography
OLEKSANDR ROSHCHYN

production design
MAXYM NIMENKO

music
MARYANA KLOCHKO

editing
NIKON ROMANCHENKO
KATERYNA GORNOSTAI

sound design
MYKHAILO ZAKUTSKYI
OLEG GOLOVESHKIN

costume design
ALYONA GRES

makeup
MARIIA PYLUNSKA

production manager
ANDRII NAUMCHUK

produced by
VITALII SHEREMETIEV
VIKA KHOMENKO
NATALIA LIBET
OLGA BESKHMELNYTSINA

executive producers
GENNADY KOFMAN
OLEKSII ZGONIK

(cast)

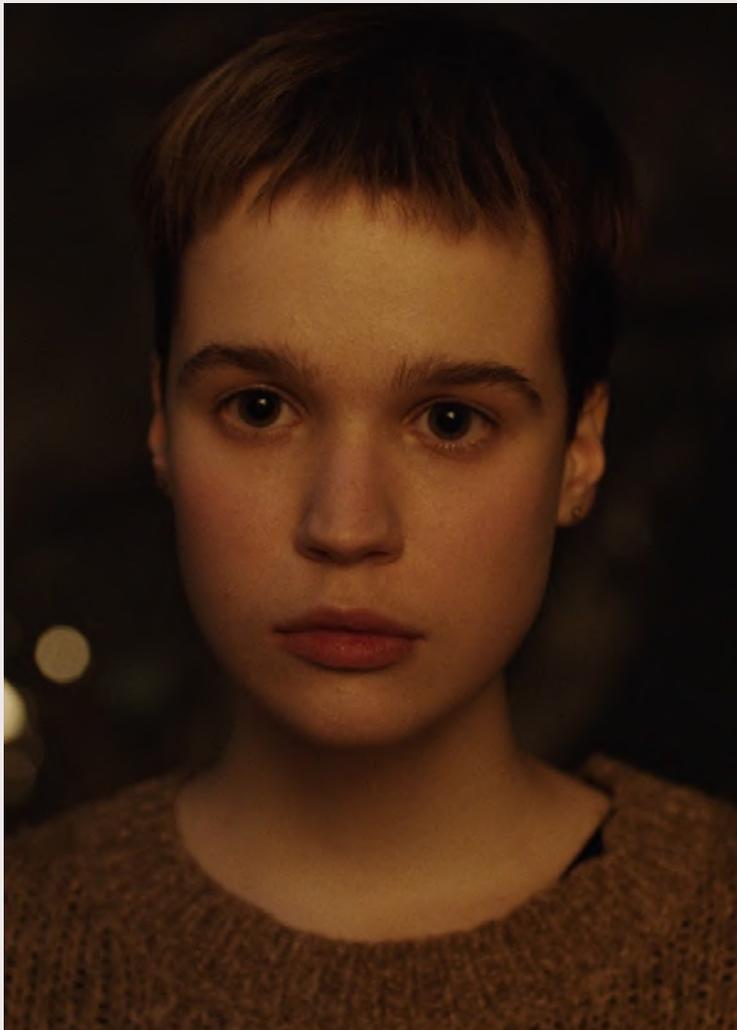
Masha Chernykh
by MARIA FEDORCHENKO

Senia Steshenko
by ARSENIII MARKOV

Yana Bratiychuk
by YANA ISAIENKO

Sasha Hanskyi
by OLEKSANDR IVANOV





(logline)

Navigating the emotional turmoil of waiting for life to begin while hanging around with classmates – a radical, authentic, and sensitive insight into the unsettling feeling of being young and an inside perspective on Ukrainian youth.

(synopsis)

An introverted high-school girl Masha sees herself as an outsider unless she hangs around with Yana and Senia who share her non-conformist status. While she is trying to navigate through an intense time of the pre-graduation year, Masha falls in love that forces her to leave her comfort zone. From a debutant Ukrainian director Kateryna Gornostai, a deeply personal story about self-discovery and the patience it requires.



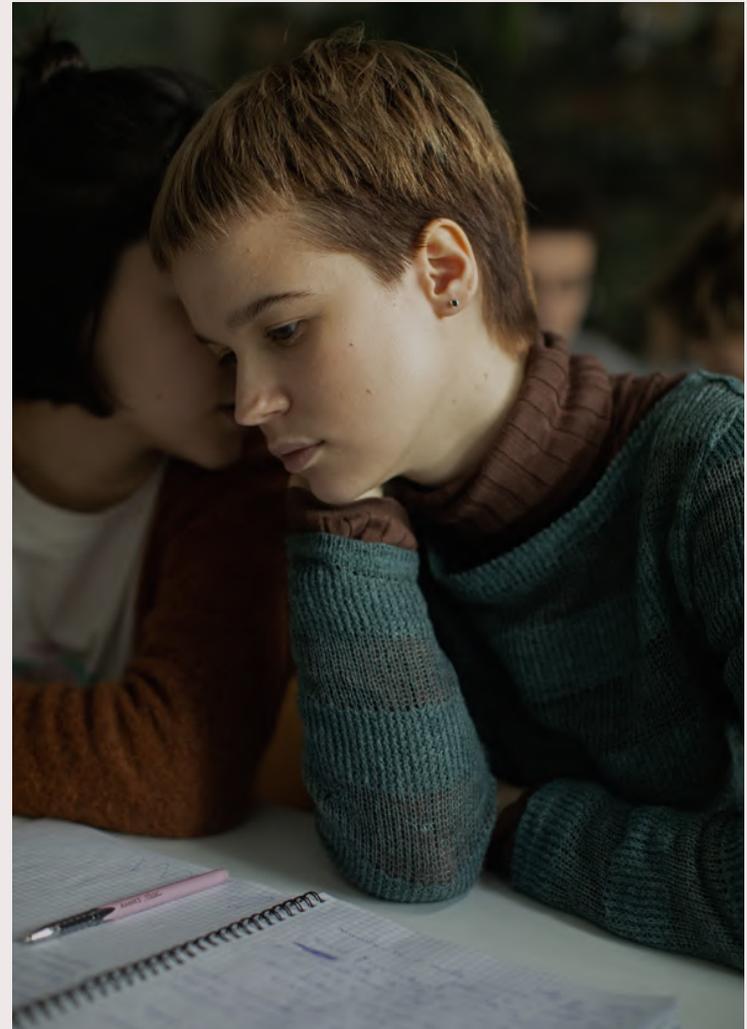


(director's statement)

Masha's story has autobiographical roots. She resembles me at the age of 16. Looking back, I realize that my first experience of an innocent slow dance influenced the formation of my sexuality more profoundly than my first sexual experience itself. This inspired me to create a film, which tells about the sensual encounters of its characters at that age when existential experience is at its most vivid. I wrote the first draft of the script on the basis of a commonplace personal drama about unrequited teenage love, focusing on the "life-that-never-happens" aspect that interests me the most. To me, it was crucial to fill it with the macro-world of the characters and tactile details of their relationship, along with relationships without relationships and the experience of attraction to another person in the motionless situation of his non-reciprocation. I was also interested in the structure of the script that would turn the remote object of passion into a fully-fledged person who develops his own universe in parallel narrative lines.

The film centers on the points of intersection between two main characters; however, although they don't appreciate it, what occurs in the background of their lives is more important. To prepare for filming and finalize the script, we interviewed more than 200 teenagers who helped us fill the story with contemporary school spirit, identify the present starting points of teenagers, and find the "Class of 25" for our film.

At the end of the casting, we were in no hurry to distribute the roles among young actors; besides, there were quite a few characters in the final draft, since the story now included male and female protagonists and their friends in supporting roles. Our primary task was the formation of a cohesive class of 25 people who did not know each other prior to casting. We organized a 9-week acting laboratory for them. It was greatly inspired by Marina Razbezhkina and Mikhail Ugarov's School of Documentary Film and Theatre, where I studied, with the focus shifted from filmmaking to acting.





Participants of the laboratory worked with improvisation and their personal experiences, analyzing their dramaturgic aspects and applying this dramaturgy to various genres, including individual and collective études, texts, documentary plays, and videos. We also invited experts in dance movement and voice development, whose classes were not intended to teach future actors to sing and dance professionally, but helped create a real class with a unique context and decrease the psychological tension of the first shooting experience.

We finally decided on the roles just before we began filming. On the basis of the laboratory, we created a matrix describing each classmate, his or her features, background, and their starting point in the film's plot. Even though most of these characters could not be included into the body of the film without turning it into a series, it was important for us to reenact everything that happened in the life of this "class" before the film.

In the course of film production, we used the script to indicate the circumstances in which the actors found themselves, leaving the actual spoken content of the episodes to them. Even though the script was originally written with all the dialogues, the actors never saw "their lines". For me, it was crucial that they fill their characters with their own speech. Our task on set was to make our characters' communication and reactions to a given situation as realistic as possible. That is, we always discussed with them only the plot trajectories and conversation vectors, leaving the content to improvisation. After each take, we worked on capturing the best material, discarding everything superfluous. Together with cinematographer Oleksandr Roshchyn, we used a similar method in our previous short fiction films "Lilac" and "Crocodile".





«Stop-Zemlia» was created & presented
with the help of:

(WIP)

2020 Film Industry's WIP @ Odesa International
Film Festival (Jury's Special Mention)

2020 Connecting Cottbus cocoWIP

2020 KVIFF Eastern Promises, the Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival's industry section

2020 First Cut Lab in Ukraine

(in development)

2018 RIGA IFF FORUM:
Children's & youth film project pitching session

2018 East-West Talent Lab @ GoEast Film Festival

2018 New Horizons Studio + @ New Horizons International
Film Festival (the New Horizons Association
& London Film Academy Main Award)

2017 Industry@Tallinn & Baltic Event
Co-Production Market

2017 Connecting Cottbus cocoPITCH
(Best Pitch & Producer's Network Awards)

2017 Film Industry's Pitching @
Odesa International Film Festival (Best Pitch Award)

(director's bio)

KATERYNA GORNOSTAI is a director, writer and film editor. She was born in Lutsk, Ukraine on March 15, 1989, and is now living in Kyiv. She has studied filmmaking at Marina Razbezhkina and Mikhail Ugarov's School of Documentary Film and Theatre, and started her career as a documentary filmmaker in 2012. Subsequently, she shifted to fiction films and hybrid forms. Film critics notice her style and ability to portray life without artificiality. Now, she also teaches documentary filmmaking at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy's School of Journalism.

(director's filmography)

- **2018: CROCODYL / CROCODILE (23')**,
a fiction short (director / writer)
- **2017: BUZOK / LILAC (30')**,
a fiction short (director /writer), a Special Jury Mention and the FIPRESCI Prize for Best Ukrainian Short Film at 2017 Odesa International Film Festival.
- **2015: SKRIZ MAIDAN / MAIDAN IS EVERYWHERE (37')**,
a middle-length documentary (director & cinematographer), the Andriy Matrosov Award at 2015 Docudays UA Festival.
- **2015: VIDDALIK / AWAY (11')**,
a fiction short (director & cinematographer), Best Ukrainian Film at 2015 Wiz-Art Film Festival, Best Acting at 2015 Odesa International Film Festival, and Best Ukrainian Short at 2015 Molodist International Film Festival.
- **2014: EUROMAIDAN. CHORNOVY MONTAZH / EUROMAIDAN. ROUGH CUT (60')**,
a documentary anthology (director & cinematographer of two novels).
- **2013: MIZH NAMY / BETWEEN US (24')**,
a documentary short (director & cinematographer).





stop.zemlia

world premiere
BERLINALE GENERATION 14PLUS

genre
TEENAGE DRAMA / ROMANCE

language
UKRAINIAN with ENGLISH ST

length
122 MINUTES

shooting format
2K ARRI ALEXA

delivery format
1:1.85, DCP, FULL HD

frame rate
24 F/SEC

sound
5.1

ESSE PRODUCTION HOUSE

Is the first full-service film production company in Ukraine. Since 1991 it has delivered more than 800 commercials, industrial and music videos as well as numerous TV-series and feature films for leading international and local clients. Its work has been recognized by various awards and nominations including an Academy Award® nomination for Best Short Film, Live Action for THE DOOR (2010) by Juanita Wilson, for which ESSE provided production services in Ukraine, and Best Short Award at BIFA for ANNA (2019) by Dekel Berenson, which was produced by ESSE in co-production with the UK and Israel.

(production)

ESSE

(production supported by)



UKRAINIAN
CULTURAL
FOUNDATION

(international promotion supported by)

**ukrainian
institute**

(world sales:)

PLUTO
FILM

© ESSE Production House

design by VITYA GLUSHCHENKO
UKRAINE, 2021

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