

A FILM BY
ALINA YKLYMOVA



FEATURE FILM


MATROŠKI





DETAILS

Genre	Tragicomedy
Duration	105 Minutes
Status	in Post-Production
Delivery	July 2026
Country	Germany
Languages	Russian, German, English
Rights Status	German TV rights licensed to SWR WDR HR
Seeking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong festival & market presence• International distribution partners• Marketing & audience development support• NGO contacts & cooperation partners
Production	Schiwagofilm
Co-Production	Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg Alina Yklymova
World Sales	Antipode Sales International



*NOT Matryoshka.
NOT Babooshka.
NOT Matryoshki.
NOT Matrjoschka.
NOT Babushki.
NOT Matryoshky.
NOT Russian dolls.
NOT Russian Barbie.
NOT Matroschka.
NOT Matroschki.
NOT Matroeschki.
NOT Matrioschki.
NOT Matroshki.
NOT Matroski.
NOT Matroshky.
NOT Matrioshka.
NOT Matroshka.
NOT Matreshki.
NOT Matreschki.
NOT Matroshka Dolls.
NOT Nesting dolls.
NOT Babushka dolls.
NOT Russian nesting dolls.
NOT Matryoshka dolls.*

It's MATRÖSHKI

MATRÖSHKI is a tragicomedy about mothers and daughters and the price of safety.



LOGLINE

In southern Germany, a young Russian exile who fled Moscow after a political protest finds her life controlled by her Soviet-nostalgic mother, who arranges a sham marriage for survival, fracturing a three-generation family of women caught between freedom and security, while a child watches a world she has no place in.

SYNOPSIS

When ten-year-old Daria arrives in southern Germany from Moscow with her mother Sasha, she is pulled into a family held together by love, control and betrayal. Sasha has fled Russia after a political protest and Daria's Soviet-nostalgic grandmother Wlada responds with a radical rescue plan: a sham marriage. For Wlada, it means protection; for Sasha, it means losing control over her own life. For Daria, it is the beginning of a world in which adults call lies necessary.

While Sasha fights not to be saved, Wlada turns fear into control. Meanwhile, Daria's aunt Nastya longs for "true love" and begins to stand up for her own needs, yet uses Daria for her own plans. Daria remains in the middle of it all: watching, adapting, trying to find her place in this broken fairy tale. MATRÖSHKI is a tragicomedy about exile, inherited chaos and the absurdity of becoming free without losing the people you love.

CREDITS

CREW

Production **SCHIWAGO FILM GMBH STUTTGART**
MARTIN LEHWALD

Producer **SIMON GROHE, SOPHIA STIER**

Production Management **ANNE-KATHRIN WINKLER, FRITHJOF STÜCKEMANN**

Production **FILMAKADEMIE BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG**

Producer **PRISKA KRAFT, TIM PETERS**

Co-Production **ALINA YKLYMOVA**

Commissioning Editor **SWR - JAN BERNING, STEFANIE GROß**

WDR - ANDREA HANKE

HR - ERIN HÖGERLE

Script **ALINA YKLYMOVA, LION DURST**

Director **ALINA YKLYMOVA**

Cinematography **SINA DIEHL**

Casting **JESSICA LAYHER**

Costume Design **STEPHANIE ZURSTEGGE**

Production Design **MAREIKE RÜCKERT**

Make-Up Artist **ALEKSANDRA KOWALSKA**

Editors **LUCAS CANTERA & MARCO ROTTIG**

Soundsupervisor **MARC UHLHERR**

Sounddesign **HANNES BERCHTOLD, IVAN SYROV**

Music **SOPHIA SÄMANN, TORSTEN BRANDES**



MAIN CAST

JANA LISSOVSKAIA – Wlada Sommerfeld

VARVARA SHMYKOVA (MINOTAUR) – Sasha Russakova

ADINA MAASS – Nastya Sommerfeld

EVA MARIA OGANESYAN – Daria Russakova

SASCHA ALEXANDER GERŠAK – Holger Schlink

RAFAEL LUIS KLEIN-HESSLING – Paul Schneider

SUPPORTING CAST

ANNE RATTE-POLLE – Ms. Fink

VALERY TSCHEPLANOWA – Irina

IRINA PLATON – Oksana

EGOR MARASOV – Lawyer Dorokhov

ILYA KHODYROV – Ivan Volkov

BARBARA COLCERIU – Ms. Jovanovski



Handwritten notes pinned to the wall, including:

- Samstag
5 Liter gelbe Wein
6 Liter für Wein
Physikalisch 11.11.18
und 11.11.18 geht
2 Liter gelb
und grün?
- Freitag
7 Liter gelbe Wein
2 Liter für Wein
Ankommen
Wie? Samstag
11.11.18
- Samstag
100 Liter Wein
35 Liter für Wein
Wein - 1 Liter
Wein? 1
Kartoffeln 1 Liter
Alte Weinzeit
Ankommen
11.11.18



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I made this film out of love for my family, from within the unresolved space that still connects us.

Shortly after February 24, 2022, my grandfather took me aside during a family dinner and said: "Whatever you do, you must remain loyal to your homeland."

That sentence stayed with me for a long time. Because what is my homeland? Russia, a country I know through language, memory and inheritance? The Soviet Union, a country that exists only as history and family mythology? Turkmenistan, the country of my early childhood? Or Germany, the country I live in today, where belonging has always felt conditional?

With Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, these questions became brutally concrete. I began speaking out publicly against the war, attended demonstrations, helped refugees at the train station and found myself arguing more and more fiercely with parts of my family who repeated Russian propaganda. At the same time, I realised I was part of a much larger conflict. In conversations with other Russian-speaking people in Germany, I understood how deeply political violence enters families. War takes place at borders, and also at the dinner table.

***MATRÖSHKI** tells the story of world events at their most intimate range: inside families, where love, loyalty, care, control, protection and betrayal become inseparably intertwined. The film looks at how political and historical conflicts deform intimate relationships while love continues to exist.*

The ensemble form is therefore also an ethical decision: it creates a space in which contradictions can be held, layered and made visible in their full human complexity.

*Casting, too, was part of that decision. It was important to work with actresses whose biographies resonate closely with those of their characters. Like Nastya, **Adina Maaß** grew up in Germany. Like Sasha, **Varvara Shmykova** came to Germany in the wake of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and has herself experienced repression in Russia. Like Wlada, **Jana Lissovskaja** has lived in Germany for many years, having come here for love and built a family here. These biographical resonances were a way of deepening the work: in the shared process, they gave the characters additional precision and contradiction.*

Equally important was the Russian language. I wanted to hear Russian that feels lived, precise and emotionally inhabited.

***MATRÖSHKI** is a tragicomedy with a documentary sensibility. In constellations like these, humour becomes a mechanism of survival. It emerges where contradictions press hardest: in kitchens, at public counters, in waiting rooms, at family tables. Here, politics is a bodily state — shame, defiance, paralysis, overwhelm.*

Perhaps this film is an act of betrayal. But that, too, belongs to the experience of those who grow up between languages, countries, histories and loyalties: someone will always place you on the other side.

The film stays close to contradictions: to the places where love becomes entangled with control, where loyalty shifts, and where survival and truth move in different directions.



DIRECTOR'S BIO



ALINA YKLYMOVA is a German-Turkmen filmmaker and a graduate of the Film Academy Baden-Württemberg, where she studied under filmmakers such as Béla Tarr, Hubert Sauper, Christian Schwochow, Nora Fingscheidt and Maren Ade.

She was supported by the Norbert Janssen Foundation's grant for emerging filmmakers, took part in the Into the Wild mentoring programme for women directors, received the Deutschlandstipendium for outstanding artistic and social achievement and participated in the X3 Spaces Residency, Storytelling Against Disinformation in the Post-East Context.

Her short films have screened nationally and internationally, including at the Max Ophüls Prize Film Festival, IN THE PALACE and Shorts Trieste and have received the Best Film Award at filmreif!, the DACHfilmzeit Innovation Award and a Special Jury Mention at the Düsseldorf Film Festival. Blending offbeat humour with emotional depth, her work focuses on characters whose desires and inner fractures emerge where the absurd disrupts everyday life. MATRÖSHKI is her fiction feature film debut.



THE FILM'S URGENCY & APPEAL

***MATRÖSHKI** is a film about the tightness of family, a space that can feel like protection and pain at the same time. It is about shame, loyalty and the inner conflict between where you come from and who you choose to become. The film takes its time because healing takes time, yet it stays claustrophobic because you do not simply walk away from your origin.*

Inheritance is political

***MATRÖSHKI** is a family film built around a deeply unromantic question: who gets to belong and at what cost. The film speaks from a post-soviet coded perspective and looks at what war does to a family far from the front line.*

Set in Germany in 2022, it follows four women whose relationships are shaped by inheritance, identity and the political arguments they keep bringing home. In this world, loyalty is not a private emotion. It is a pressure test between mothers and daughters.

Belonging has a price

*Tragicomedy is the film's weapon. **MATRÖSHKI** lets the audience laugh, then confronts them with the price of survival and the fear of becoming your mother. It is intimate, political and sharply entertaining because the absurdity is real.*



LOOK & TONE

MATRÖSHKI plays like a warm family gathering that turns into a pressure test. It is an intimate tragicomedy where politics does not arrive as a headline. It arrives as a look, a silence, a raised voice, a form that needs one more proof. The film lets the audience laugh, then makes them realize what they were laughing to survive.

Camera and visual language

The camera stays close enough to feel breath and hesitation. Mostly handheld, it tracks the small shifts that decide who holds power in a room and who folds. We shoot reactions instead of explanations. Meaning lives in what people swallow, in what they almost say, in what they cannot afford to admit.

The point of view moves between characters, like a family argument where alliances change mid sentence.

Rhythm and pacing

This is a dialogue driven film that refuses to rush. Scenes are built to pull you in, not to push you forward. Pauses are not empty. They are loaded. Awkward gaps and unfinished sentences become the real action. We stay with everyday rituals until the tension snaps.

Tragicomedy

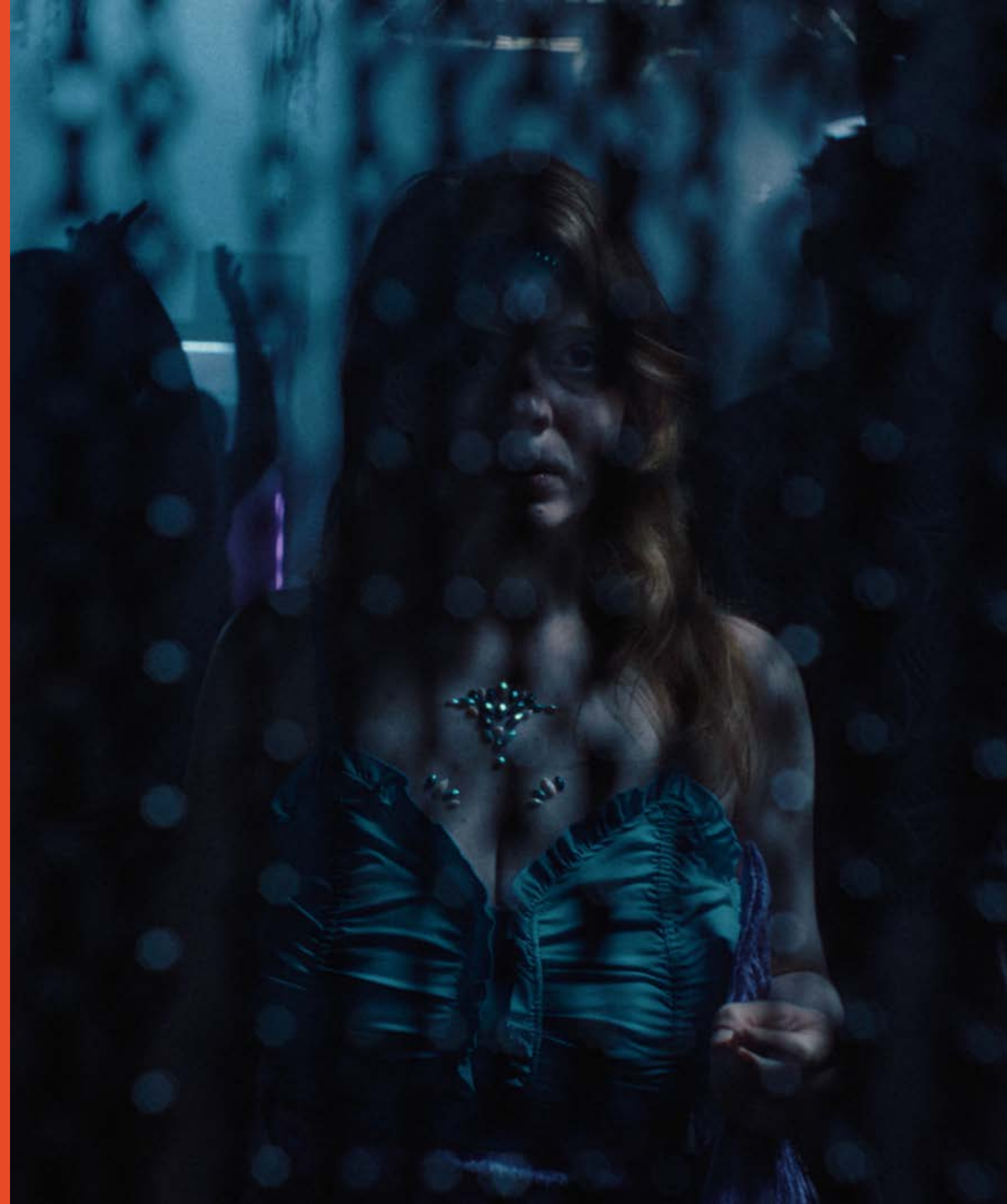
The humor is dry, awkward and painfully recognizable. No punchlines, just situations that are absurd because they are real. Laughter is a coping mechanism. It keeps the characters human until it turns bitter.

Spaces and world

The film moves between two worlds that feel equally claustrophobic: home and the system. Kitchens, bathrooms, bathtubs, then waiting rooms, glass counters, offices where lives get processed. These spaces shape posture and language. Architecture becomes pressure.

Sound and music

Sound stays grounded, close to the skin. The score is used sparingly but sharply, sitting between melancholy and a strange lightness. Each character has a different emotional frequency. The sound design lets you feel when they harmonize and when they collide.





TRAILER

TRAGICOMEDY

PW: MTS2025-AtomarerSenf

MORE TRAGIC THAN COMEDY

PW: MTS2025-AtomarerSenf



















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