

THE FILM IS DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF PRIEST MARTYR
MICHAEL BELORROSOV WHO GLORIFIED GOD
WITH HIS LIFE AND DEATH

OFF IN THE DISTANCE



ПРИ ПОДДЕРЖКЕ
ФОНДА
ПРЕЗИДЕНТСКИХ
ГРАНТОВ

Media-museum of Spitual history
of Romanov-Borisoglebsk



INFORMATION ABOUT THE FILM

Release year: 2021 Length: 14 min

Documentary

Director and script writer – Victoria Fomina

Cameraman and director, post-production artist – Maksim Orekhov

Cameraman – Jacob (Aleksander) Brooks

Songwriter – Vadim Kuzmin (1963 – 2012)

Sound engineer – Anna Freidman

Post-production manager – Marina Kruchenova

Editor – Marina Turovskaya

Placard – Georgii Petrov

The following took part in the filming: Archpriest George Yudin; Priest Nicholas, Matushka Natalia, and Maria Bushe; Sergei Dontsov; Michael, Galina, and Ksenia Kolomytsev; Svetlana, Tatiana, and Sofia Komov; Lev and Nicholas Noskov; Evgenii Zaraiskii; Aleksander Gromov; Maria Abramyan; Rodeo and other animals from the Kuznetsovo farm

Film produced by Autonomous Nonprofit Organization «Studio «Other Haven»».

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ANNOTATION

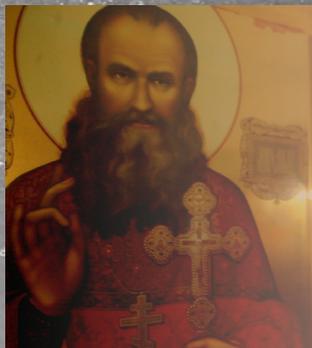
The film is dedicated to the memory of Priest Martyr Michael Belorrosov who glorified God with his life and death. No one played any roles, we simply tried to imagine his last day.

It happened 100 years ago. The action begins in 1920 and continues to recent events when Priest Martyr Michael Belorrosov appeared in a dream to Colonel Sergei Evgenevich Dontsov and helped him to rebuild a church.



Film produced within the framework of the Media Museum on the Spiritual History of the town of Romanov-Borisoglebsk and the financial support from the Fund of Presidential Grants

PRIEST MARTYR MICHAEL BELOROSOV



Michael Belorossoff was born on May 11, 1869, into the family of Deacon Pavel Belorossoff a year after he had been ordained and assigned to serve in the Church of the Savior in Romanov. Arch-priest Michael serving in The Church of the Resurrection in Romanov-Borisoglebsk for 24 years. He was teaching God's Law in the municipal industrial school and headed the best regional school.

After the Church of the Resurrection in Romanov-Borisoglebsk was closed, 13 february 1920, his family, in search of a livelihood, moved to to his Yaroslavl relatives for food. Fr Michael was warned that it was dangerous to be seen on the road. Three communists were enough to execute someone - especially a priest. It was dangerous to be seen on the road in clerical garb with a cross on his chest. He sent his wife and children on a separate cart. On the road he was accused of being a member of counter-revolutionary plot. They executed him by shooting and teared his silver cross off. Some local peasants recognized the dying Priest and carried him secretly in the cart back to the Trinity Church in town. Friend could bury Father Michael Belorossoff near the Trinity Church Altar.

In 2000, the Russian Orthodox Church canonized Fr Michael Belorossoff as a hieromartyr

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Victoria Fomina – graduated from the Department of Physics at Moscow State University's branch of Theoretical Physics, defended a dissertation at the All-Russia State Institute of Cinematography in the Department of Aesthetics of History and Cultural Theory. Script writer and director of documentary films and TV programs («Obvious and Unbelievable,» «Fractal,» etc.), candidate of art history, associate professor at Moscow State University of Psychology and Education, director of ANO «Studio «Ohter Haven» and the Media Museum on the Spiritual History of the town of Romanov-Borisoglebsk.



Maksim Orekhov – graduated from Moscow State University of Psychology and Education with a specialization as Director of Multimedia Programs. Head programmer for the Research Institute of Atmospheric Physics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Director of ANO «Studio «Ohter Haven» since 2014, Media Director at the Media Museum on the Spiritual History of the town of Romanov-Borisoglebsk. Cameraman and director of documentary films, director of student fiction films and video clips, and the «Churches of Romanov-Borisoglebsk» historical series of animated documentaries.



Jacob (Aleksander) Brooks – graduated with an associate’s degree in photography from Nashville State Technical College, graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Russian Language and Literature from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Translator, editor, and curator at the

Media Museum on the Spiritual History of the town of Romanov-Borisoglebsk.



Anna Freidman – graduated from the Department of Sound Engineering at Saint Petersburg State University of Film and Television, head engineer of multimedia at Rostelekom, multi-instrumentalist, member of several musical groups, composer and sound

engineer for films and TV programs.



Marina Kruchenova – graduated from the Institute of Light Industry (Kosygin Russian State University) with a specialization in shoe design, has a second degree as a copywriter of internet projects, volunteer at the «Life route» fund and the Media Museum on the

Spiritual History of the town of Romanov-Borisoglebsk.



Vadim (Dima) Kuzmin (1963 – 2012) – one of the pioneers of Siberian punk rock, leader of the rock group «Chyorny Lukich» («Lukich»), author of songs performed by «Grazhdanskaya oborona,» «Spinkimenta,» «Taiga,» «Muzhik dens,» etc., as well as a number of his own albums.

At present, there is a yearly concert in his memory in Novosibirsk and an air hockey competition. The song «Off in the distance» from album «Forever» is used with the gracious permission of his widow, Elena Kuzmina.



VISUALIZATION OF A MIRACLE

Fragments of a publication in the «Literary Collider» journal
02.06.2021 from E. Ermakova



I was introduced to the documentaries of "Studio "Other Heaven" 15 years ago, while working as the program director of the Festival of Philosophical Cinema. I was mesmerized by the unique, just emerging but already recognizable traits of director Victoria Fomina. In films wherein the heroes were holy ascetics, the four-dimensional, mystical space of the a miracle was explored and visualized. It is no coincidence that these film-portraits began to receive awards at festivals and were included into courses of several universities in the discipline "Evolution of Cinematic Language," and the studio was described as a "workshop for the study of the visualization of meaning." As part of the work of the "Studio "Other Heaven", the Media Museum on the Spiritual History of the city of Romanov-Borisoglebsk was created, which was given a Presidential Grant two times. In May 2021, museum projects were awarded gold medals by the International Academy of Contemporary Arts and awards were given to the Media Museum on the Spiritual History of the city of Romanov-Borisoglebsk and the film "At the Window," which is dedicated to the memory of Priest Martyr Jacob Arkhipov. I decided to talk with the head of the «Other Heaven» Studio», academician of the Eurasian Academy of Television and Radio, associate professor of

Moscow State University of Psychology and Education, director of the Media Museum on the Spiritual History of Romanov-Borisoglebsk, director and screenwriter, and candidate of art history Victoria Fomina on the possibilities to show the mystical space of the miracle on the screen by means of cinema.

- Victoria, I remember how I asked you 15 years ago what you most want in life. You said, "To make Orthodox movies." I was so surprised... What does "Orthodox cinema" mean to you and how has your attitude towards this type of art changed since then?

- I was baptized at the age of 29 when I had already graduated from the Physics Department of Moscow State University, had a skill category in bridge, played preferans for money, smoked a pack of Prima cigarettes a day, and worked part-time at beauty contests creating images for girls. This life cracked when I left Gerasimov All-Russia Institute of Cinematography to provide for my children. My horizon changed - I now wanted to drive along a bumpy road to a ruined temple or monastery, filming along the way. Orthodoxy, cinema, and extreme driving were the components of the image of happiness for me. Since then, having driven to my heart's content, I have barely mastered the skills of civilized driving, but I cope with off-road driving with God's help. It is probably the same with cinema. During this time, I have realized that the most important thing is the person. In Orthodoxy in general, truth is not a concept but a Person, or rather Jesus Christ. This attitude is very near to me; all my films are portraits. But a portrait requires more than freedom of movement.

Films about shrines of the Orthodox Church and films that affirm the values of the Gospel are not quite the same thing. Tarkovsky's brilliant film "Andrei Rublev," based on the life of St. Andrew, is, first of all, the story of an artist, while the science fiction "Stalker," filmed according to "Roadside Picnic" by the Strugatsky brothers, is a film about a saint. Material, historical or otherwise, is the direction of the author's view, while it is no less important who is looking and why.

- The following words of Father Pavel Florensky are in the film "At the Window": "Icons have repeatedly been not only a window through which the faces depicted on them were seen but also a door through which these faces entered the material world." Who are your heroes: contemporaries or saints?

- I have always been interested in geniuses - not in "everyday life" but in heroism. Most people act according to the least resistance: "Fish always look for deeper water, while man looks for somewhere better." But if everyone were to act selfishly, then according to the second law of thermodynamics, chaos would ensue, entropy would increase, and the thermal death of the Universe would take place. In studying synergetics, I found out that for the survival of any system, some part of it, about ten percent, must act differently. Roughly speaking, against personal gain and the instinct for self-preservation. Konrad Lorenz wrote that in animal populations, females often attack hunters, defending their offspring, taking a blow. Heroism is also anti-entropic behavior. Columbus, instead of sitting in the shop of his Jewish father, began to sail around

the world having fallen in love with the English queen, and Academician Korolev was working on astronautics in Stalin's camps. Academician Rauschenbach called it "the gene of religiosity" - he wrote it in quotation marks as a metaphor. In parallel, geneticist Vladimir Efroimson investigated a similar phenomenon of anti-entropic behavior, when a person, instead of saving his skin, gravitates to something completely different. Boris Rauschenbach himself, in prison during the war, in a Siberian barrack without a roof, taught mathematics then switched to space research. In short, in communicating with geniuses or reading their memoirs, I realized that none of them were purposely saving the population - they were guided by sincere personal motives of love, pain, support, interest, a desire to preserve what is important. From the outside, it seems that they lived with inspiration and appeared young. But when you start to write about a person, especially to make a film, you literally feel like you are "in his shoes." Not completely, of course, but as they say, to the extent of one's own depravity. But editing is a very close relationship. Making portrait sketches of scientists and philosophers, I more and more felt how unhappy they were. Sometimes, to the point of complete despair. Talent is a tough thing. Do you remember that in the Gospel the Lord gave to each one as much he could bear? And I, getting into other people's "skins," would sometimes be flattened under the weight of the burden, and I realized that I could not endure and became discouraged. Later, filming the lives of saints and modern heroes-ascetics, I realized that the saints are like geniuses, only they are happy. This information turned out to be colossal for me - the main topic that I have

been studying for thirty years from different angles: in the form of a dissertation, a monograph, a museum, and making films.

- Your film "Spaces of Life" based on the books of one of the founders of astronautics, Academician Rauschenbach, is devoted to the study and visualization of the sacred space that connects the Divine and human worlds. Can you say where your traits are in it?

- What are my traits should be clearer from the outside. I just shoot as I see, more precisely, as I believe. My films take place not in three-dimensional physical space, but in four-dimensional space. The geometry of this four-dimensional space of the miracle was very specifically described by Boris Rauschenbach. When asked why Gagarin did not see God in space, Boris would say: "God cannot be in the physical heavens, we mathematicians believe that He is in the fourth dimension." He also said: "We and the angels are in the same place, in the same room, but we never meet because we're on opposite sides of the page." It's probably easier for us to imagine this as a double exposure: at the same point on the screen but images on different layers. This is the space of the miracle, where the angels are much closer to us than the distance of an outstretched hand. You can show this in a variety of ways. I remember how Vadim Koshkin, the media director of "Spaces of Life," filmed the Astronautics Alley and, speeding it up, washed away the crowd of people, leaving and turning around the static geometry of the monuments. Nikita Vyazankin, then a fourth-year student of the Moscow State University of Psychology and Education, and I projected

the Angel's wing from the "Trinity" of St. Andrei Rublev; this shimmering frame lay almost as a transparent layer throughout the film, but at moments of important decisions and turns in the hero's fate, it became visible.

- What is considered a miracle in Orthodoxy and how can it be shown by means of cinema?

- The four-dimensional model very clearly clarifies everything - it does not remove the mystery, but sets the context in which options of development unpredictable by logic are possible.



In the nonlinear space of a miracle, the mystical influence of the fourth dimension is stronger than banal logic and it is a linear causal relationship. This picture of the world allows us to understand many things, for instance, in the lives of the new martyrs when a priest did not deny Christ and was shot. However, the Lord was crucified on the cross more than 2000

years ago. It would seem that it is difficult to harm Him, and the children of the priest and his wife were left without ration cards in the years of famine. But the Gospel says: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all will be added to you" [Matt. 6:33]. But how is this? Many do not understand. Relatives say that it was immoral to do this in relation to one's family, and for decades they kept grudges against people glorified as saints in the 20th century.

We begin to film their lives and learn that in the family of Hieromartyr Jacob Arkhipov, for example, there were a number of situations when his children or widow were on the verge of death but miraculously everything turned out well. In the end, everyone survived and even received a good education, despite the persecution and the years of famine. In three-dimensional space, it is not clear how this could happen, but when we film it using a double exposure, we see that at a critical moment the executed father is much closer than all the wrong-doers and troubles. The turn around for the better is not an accident, but his intercession - a miracle that is the non-linear logic of a double exposure. Academician Rauschenbach says that due to our denseness, we are not used to noticing, seeing, and taking into account the fourth mystical dimension. We are trying to at least honestly visualize it, thus, the logic of living is established. This is not a trait, not an artistic style, but an outlook on the world that gives me the strength to live. This is a visualization of meaning. How original is it? It makes no difference to me.

- What role does time play in your films? Is it important to you what era the hero of the film "Off in the Distance,"

Archpriest-Martyr Mikhail Belorossoff, lived in? Old photographs and a modern village ... How do you combine the timeframes?

- In cinema, there is another category of time that is not linear; the closest thing here is the cyclical time of the myth. "Off in the Distance" was filmed exactly one hundred years after the murder of Fr Mikhail Belorossoff. The Bolsheviks, who noticed his priestly cross, killed him on his way to Yaroslavl. He was asked not to draw attention to himself - to take off his vestments before the trip, but Archpriest Michael did not obey. He sent his family in a separate cart, and he went still wearing his cassock. We could say that the cruel times are to blame for everything, right? But he had to leave because the church had been closed. In Romanov, all churches were handed over to the communities of believers and they were asked for rent, some paid, but they did not in the Church of the Resurrection. They seemed to love their priest, went to Sunday school, to the icon-painting workshop, but they refused to pay the rent. Why?

I don't know exactly what happened then. But I see what is happening now, when Hieromartyr Mikhail Belorossoff has already been glorified as a saint, that we revere him and that he works miracles and helps many people. But for several years it has not even been possible to publish a book about him. Money has already been found, the book's even been translated into English, the layout is finished, the printing house is waiting but no one can agree - first one person has doubts, then another. And in the end, there is simply no book. Maybe there was something similar at the time? We filmed not about what was then, but about what is now. We

filmed people who truly revere him, who really hurt for him. A goat also ran after the departing priest itself. Even the snow was real - in the month of April! Last year on February 14, the day of Fr Michael's death, the weather was like in Sochi, while it started to snow in April. As soon as we shot the last scene in the forest, the snow stopped and it turned out to be a warm April.

What is time? Our spiritual father, Archimandrite Raphael (Baranik), died 4 years ago, but hundreds of people are still inspired by their interaction with him, they compare themselves with his thoughts, pray to, consult with, and thank him. Since we started making a film about him, his ideas, phrases, and logical constructions have certainly entered our life. A more famous example is the endless, in a multitude of essays and articles, dispute between Konchalovsky and Tarkovsky, who died 35 years ago, which for every filmmaker is still more alive than all living things. Epochs and styles change, but it remains modern. Eternity is felt here and now, closer than the past or the future.

- How do you feel about such a technique as reconstruction in documentary filmmaking? In "Off in the Distance," you say, "We didn't play anything. We really are his parishioners ..."

- But we really didn't play anything. Everything, as usual, went wrong from the very beginning - the greenhouse prevented shooting from the second floor window, it turned out to be more difficult to control the horse than we thought. As a result, the cameraman, Jacob Brooks, climbed up a tree. And when the chest fell from the cart, remember? Well, in

that chest sat a horsekeeper named Lev, who, from the abrupt stop, fell off into the snow, but did not die, thank God. The chest, however, broke, for which I still feel guilty before the owner of the farm, Mikhail Kolomytsev. But it is clear that by comparing plans according to the Kuleshov effect, you can create a variety of mise-en-scenes; the "Big Animation Book" deals with elliptical montage, and so on. Maxim Orekhov, who worked on the film not only as a director of photography, but also as the post-production artist, brilliantly carried out frame-by-frame work with video, translucent photo expositions during the last journey of Fr Michael Belorossof that appeared as a stream of memory tearing his soul apart. They say that he knew he was going to be killed.



- You say that your films about the holy new martyrs are "a form of organizing a fading memory." What is memory for you?
- Memory is the context in which I perceive the present and

the future, a ruler, a pattern, a database ... The main thing is that memory determines the heroic myth - the plot in which I live. The word "education" in Russian has the root "image": "Offering images of repentance to me..." [a line from the penitential canon of St Andrew of Crete, translator]- it is very important upon whose face you open your eyes.

In 2000, more than 1000 new martyrs and confessors were canonized - more than in the entire previous history of the Russian Orthodox Church; most of these people are buried in common graves. Many relatives, fearing repression, destroyed photographs and documents; besides the archives of the NKVD, little is known about these people. Some of our contemporaries literally bit by bit are resurrecting their memory, but, in general, this topic is of little interest to anyone. Orthodox themes, besides Easter cakes and holy water at Epiphany, are in a kind of cultural ghetto. Everything is in God's hands. But it is important to me that their holy memory lives on, and being a director is a way to preserve what is dear to me. A way to participate. The "Studio "Other Heaven" and the Media Museum on the Spiritual History of the city of Romanov-Borisoglebsk, with all its media installations, layout, etc. exist for this reason.

The interview was conducted by Lena Ermakova, candidate of art history.