



When
Lightning
Flashes
Over
The
Sea



75th Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Forum

a film by
EVA NEYMANN



Cast

Fadey Fadeev, Madona Hupenia, Igor Vlasenko, Nina Ulchik, Dora Razen, Valeriy Bassel, Anzhela Savostianova, Irina Babanina, Dmytro Nuzhyn, Solomon Nuzhyn, Dmytro Shulyakov, Vitali Shulyakov

Crew

Director: **Eva Neymann**
Cinematography: **Eva Neymann, Saša Oreškovič**
Editing: **Pavel Zalesov**
Sound: **Mykola Shepotin**
Sound Designers: **Walentin Pinchuk, Sasha Valent**
Postproduction Supervisor: **Torsten Giewat**
Conforming & Mastering: **Marcus Büchner**
Music Supervisor: **Martin Hossbach**
Re-Recording Mixer: **Maxim Romasevich**
Colorgrading: **Dirk Meier, Artem Stretovych**
Redaktion rbb: **Rolf Bergmann**
Co-Producer: **Eva Neymann**
Producer: **Kirill Krasovski**

Production

Produced by: **Blue Monticola Film GmbH**
in co-production with: **Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (rbb)**

Germany/Ukraine 2025

124 min. color

Original languages in the film: **Russian, Ukrainian, Yiddish**
Language version: **OV with English subtitles**
Domestic theatrical release: **4Q 2025**

Förderung: **Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien (BKM), Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg**



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Germany, Ukraine, 2025, 124 min, colour





Logline

Street cats, islands of light, flings, losses, and descriptions. From the people of Odesa and their cats, whom Eva Neymann portrays with gentle care, she seeks to uncover their dreams when war destroys all certainty.

»I'd like to get a job on a cruise liner. And the sails would be sky-blue. A very delicate, very pretty blue.«



»What we do now is we get out the
binoculars and scan the horizon.

...

I see a new life, I see freedom,
I see Constantinople.«





Eva Neymann on When Lightning Flashes Over The Sea

What inspired this film and its creative process?

The first impulse, first, was the war. The outbreak hit me while I was in Ukraine. I felt the same shock as everyone else. It immediately became clear that this was a unique, pivotal moment for this place. Right away, I knew: I wanted to create a document of the era to capture this moment in history.

That was the first realization. The second was about form. At the same time, I read Natsume Soseki's book *Ten Nights of Dreams*. It features ten amazing dreams that have a surreal beauty and are distant from reality. That sense of freedom, that structure, inspired me. I wanted to convey reality as seen through the lens of dreams.

Why did dreams during the war get into your directorial lens?

Because I've always felt that if we talk about freedom, then a person is, first and foremost, free in their dreams. And no one can take that away. Dreams are so deeply subjective that there can be no other perspectives on them. Reality can be seen in many ways. Facts can change based on perception. However, each person is the ultimate master of their own truth.

Dreams belong to them unconditionally; they cannot be taken, defeated, or destroyed. In this sense, a person is invincible. Especially in terrifying times, this is where one can seek and find solace and hope.

I aimed to create a document that reflects a specific time and place. I wanted to focus on people's inner feelings instead of external events. These emotions often stay hidden and unheard, tucked away inside. That interested me the most.

At the same time, I didn't want the film to feel like a news report. I wanted it to capture a specific moment in a way that would have a lasting impact, staying relevant long after its release. My goal was to create something that would resonate universally and stand the test of time, moving beyond the immediate.

As it turned out, my intuition was right. People weren't very willing to talk about the war directly, about their personal experiences. One reason was that those experiences changed over time. Another reason was that when a camera is near, people expect to be asked about the war, and that can feel invasive. Even those who were open to conversation often either repeated themselves or didn't want to talk about it at all, as if everything was already clear. And if something remained unclear, perhaps it wasn't meant to be spoken about.

But when people started talking about something deeply personal, that was truly fascinating. They became incredibly compelling.

What is your connection with Odesa?

I was born and raised in Zaporizhzhia, but I've always felt a special bond with Odesa through my grandfather and relatives. Maybe their love for the city rubbed off on me, or maybe it was something more. Either way, Odesa became my dream city, and it still is. It's a one-of-a-kind place where miracles can happen and incredible things can occur. As a child, I felt that way, and that feeling has stayed with me.

In the film, there's a character sitting on a bench, looking through binoculars, saying: "I see a new life, I see freedom, I see Constantinople." It's as if he's speaking my own thoughts.

In Odesa, we like to think – even if it's not entirely true – that beyond the horizon, across the sea, lie wondrous distant lands. The magical word "Constantinople" still shines, even though the city no longer exists. But something glimmers beyond the horizon – it must be freedom.

I wasn't the only one who felt this way. I met someone by chance who had the exact same feeling. It was both surprising and deeply familiar.

I've become so deeply connected to Odesa that it feels like a part of me, like a root. That's why I've shot all my films, from my student years on, in Odesa – both documentaries and fiction films.



»A time that's scary even
to remember, let alone live
through.«

A man in a green jacket is sitting in a museum gallery, reading a book. The gallery features dark wooden display cases and a teal wall. The scene is dimly lit, with the man's face and the book he is holding being the primary light sources. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

»The museum exhibition features...
featured... works by icon painters of
the 16th and 17th century.«



Biography

Eva Neymann

Eva Neymann is a Ukrainian film director and screenwriter known for her poetic and visually rich storytelling. She studied law in Marburg before pursuing film directing at the German Film and Television Academy Berlin (DFFB). Her films often explore themes of memory, nostalgia, and human resilience, frequently drawing inspiration from literature. Neymann gained international recognition with works such as *At the River* (2007), *House with a Turret* (2012), and *Song of Songs* (2015), the latter based on Sholem Aleichem's writings. Her distinct cinematic style, marked by atmospheric imagery and a contemplative pace, has earned her critical acclaim at various international film festivals. Her latest film, *When Lightning Flashes Over the Sea* (2025), was invited to the 55th Berlinale Forum. She lives and works in Berlin.

Filmography

2025 WHEN LIGHTNING FLASHES OVER THE SEA
(Documentary)

- Berlinale Forum

2021 PRYVOZ (Documentary)

- DocLisboa
- Sheffield DocFest
- Krakow Film Festival
- DOK Leipzig
- Docudays UA

2015 SONG OF SONGS

- Karlovy Vary IFF – Award of the Ecumenical Jury
- OIFF Odesa – Best Film Award & Best Ukrainian Production
- Festival International de Films de Fribourg – FIPRESCI Award
- TIFF
- Festival du Nouveau Cinéma
- Istanbul IFF
- Chicago IFF
- Göteborg Film Festival

2012 THE HOUSE WITH A TURRET

- Karlovy Vary IFF – East of the West Award
- Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival – Grand Prix & Best Cinematographer
- Istanbul IFF – People’s Choice Award
- Seattle IFF

2007 AT THE RIVER

- IFF Rotterdam
- BFI Film Festival London
- CineFest – Miskolc International Film Festival – Critics Award
- Wiesbaden goEast – Award of the Federal Foreign Office

2007 GOD’S WAYS (Documentary)

- IDFA
- Thessaloniki Documentary Festival
- First Steps Award



Production

Blue Monticola Film GmbH
Magdeburg, Germany
info@blue-monticola-film.de
www.blue-monticola-film.de

International Press

Gloria Zerbinati
gloria.zerbinati@gmail.com
+33 (0)7 86 80 02 82

Festivals

Pascale Ramonda
pascale@pascaleramonda.com
www.pascaleramonda.com

Distributor Germany

Peter Stockhaus
déjà-vu film
dispo@dejavu-film.de







www.blue-monticola-film.de