

# SILENT SOULS

**A Film by Aleksei Fedorchenko**

Released by Shadow Distribution

In Russian with English Subtitles

75 Minutes

***Official Selection:***

New York Film Festival 2010  
Toronto International Film Festival 2010  
Venice International Film Festival 2010

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**[www.shadowdistribution.com](http://www.shadowdistribution.com)**

# SILENT SOULS

*In this land there are only two gods: love and water.*

## **SYNOPSIS:**

When Miron's beloved wife Tanya passes away, he asks his best friend Aist to help him say goodbye to her according to the rituals of the Merja culture, an ancient Finno-Ugric tribe from Lake Nero, a picturesque region in West-Central Russia. Although the Merja people assimilated into Russians in the 17th century, their myths and traditions live on in their descendants' modern life.

The two men set out on a road trip thousands of miles across the boundless land, with them, two small birds in a cage. Along the way, as is custom for the Merjans, Miron shares intimate memories of his conjugal life. But as they reach the banks of the sacred lake where they will forever part with the body, he realizes he wasn't the only one in love with Tanya...

## **THE MERJANS:**

The Merja people (also Merya) were an ancient Finno-Ugric people who lived in the regions of the modern Russian cities Rostov, Kostroma, Jaroslavl and Vladimir. Their important cultural marks are unearthed in the numerous archaeological finds in the areas.

The Merjans were assimilated by the Slavs and, later, into Russian culture. However, their culture survived in the regions they initially inhabited. Sacred woods and stones, worshiped by the Merjans, were part of local traditional feasts and holy festivals for much longer than the Slavic sacred places in the western regions of modern Russia.

# SILENT SOULS

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

The original Russian title of my film, *Ovsyanki*, is the Russian word for bunting birds, a cousin of the American sparrow. These small greenish-yellow birds found almost everywhere in Russia usually go unnoticed. Yet experts often compare them to canaries that would have learned to sing.

Miron Alekseevich, the director of a paper industrial complex from the small Kostroma town Neya; Aist Sergeyev, the official photographer of the same industrial complex; and Miron's beloved wife and painter Tanya, are everyday people. What is unseen is their vision of the world, inherited from an ancient tribe, and the unimaginable passion storming through their deep and silent souls. They could be compared to these small birds: simple, common at first glance, yet revealing riches only sensed by keen eyes.

Although the action takes place in our time and all the characters are modern people, their adventures are connected to the past, to the mysterious Merja people. Although the Merjans have been assimilated into Russian culture for a long time, we here make the assumption that they still live amongst us. They are no different from other people: they dress like us, speak like us, eat like us. But the Russian blood running in their veins is more Finno-Ugric than Slavic. They are able to recognize one another with some special signs only they perceive. And during the most dramatic moments of their lives, they lean on one another and turn to their ancient rituals. For the Merjans, there are no gods – only Love and Water.

I have knit from the known facts an imaginary mythology from the Volga region. My intention is to show another vision of Russia, a country where the most ancient pre-Orthodox pagan traditions and human dynamics would be freed from civilization's platitude and banality. I have tried to show a strict and beautiful world inhabited by pure and sincere people - a world that is almost at reach, but does not exist for real. In this world, living, loving and dying are desirable.

SILENT SOULS is a road trip to the most undercover corners of the human soul, a requiem to love, an homage to women, a journey during which melancholy and tenderness fuse together.

- *Aleksei Fedorchenko*

# SILENT SOULS

## DIRECTOR'S BIO:

Aleksei Fedorchenko was born on September 29, 1966 in Sol-Iletsk, in the Orenburg region of Siberia.

After getting his degree in engineering, he worked on space defense projects in a factory in Sverdlovsk (Ekaterinburg). In 1990, he became the official economist, then deputy director, of the Sverdlovsk Studio. Since 2000, he has managed the studio's production department, and participated in the production of over 80 films. He has studied dramaturgy at the Russian National Film Institute, and written screenplays for documentaries that were awarded numerous prizes at festivals worldwide.

Fedorchenko's first feature *FIRST ON THE MOON*, a mockumentary about a 1930s Soviet landing on the moon, was awarded, amongst other awards, the Venice Horizons Documentary Award.

Aleksei Fedorchenko currently lives and works in Ekaterinburg. *SILENT SOULS* is his third feature film.

## DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY:

- 2010 *Ovsyanki* (SILENT SOULS) - feature-length fiction film
- 2008 *Bannui den* - documentary
- 2008 *Zheleznaya Doroga* (THE RAILWAY) - feature-length fiction film
- 2006 *Shosho* - fiction video
- 2005 *Pervye na Lune* (FIRST ON THE MOON) - feature-length fiction film
- 2002 *David* - documentary

# SILENT SOULS

## CAST:

IGOR SERGEYEV: Aist

YURI TSURILO: Miron

YULIYA AUG: Tanya

IVAN TUSHIN: Aist as a child

## CREW:

ALEKSEI FEDORCHENKO: Director

DENIS OSOKIN: Screenplay, based on novel *Ovsyanki* by Aist Sergeyev

IGOR MISHIN & MARY NAZARI: Producers

MIKHAIL KRICHMAN: Director of Photography

ALEKSEI POTAPOV: Art Director

ANNA BARTHULY: Costume Designer

OLGA GILEVA: Casting Director

IGOR KHOMSKY: Director of Post-Production

SERGEI IVANOV: Editor

KIRILL VASILENKO: Sound Editor

ANDREI KARASYOV: Composer

# SILENT SOULS

**Release Date:** September 16, 2011

**Running Time:** 75 Minutes

**Language:** In Russian with English Subtitles

**Russian Title:** *Ovsyanki*

**Aspect Ratio:** 2.35:1 (scope)

**Format:** 35mm

**Rating:** Not Rated

**Official Selection:** New York Film Festival 2010  
Toronto International Film Festival 2010  
Venice International Film Festival 2010

**Press Materials:** [www.shadowdistribution.com](http://www.shadowdistribution.com)

**Official Website:** [www.silentsoulsfilm.com](http://www.silentsoulsfilm.com)

## **PRODUCTION COMPANY:**

April Mig Pictures Film Company  
Media Mir Foundation

## **RELEASED BY SHADOW DISTRIBUTION:**

Shadow Distribution is a small film distribution company located in Waterville, Maine, dedicated to releasing unusual, specialized films. Founded in 1988, the company has distributed some of the best independent films of the last two decades including THE WILD PARROTS OF TELEGRAPH HILL, LATCHO DROM, Oscar nominee THE WEATHER UNDERGROUND, HEADING SOUTH, Oscar nominee UNDER THE SUN and most recently, EARTHWORK.

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