

ring of fire

a documentary by Signe Birkova



THE ONLY WAY OUT IS THROUGH

Four actors, unwanted by any of the national theatres in Riga, establish their own independent theatre troupe "Quadrifron", setting up a stage in the stables of the legendary Riga Circus. They change their lives and confront the circus building's darkly ambiguous legacy of animal performance. Combining 16 mm film and analogue Betacam formats, the film documents the creativity exuding from the four actors as they put together performances and compose songs. It captures their strength and exhaustion, the things they hide and their desperate attempts to live authentic and creative lives. Famous clown Slava Polunin also illuminated the "Ring of Fire" with his presence. For him, the concept of happiness and creativity is one and the same.

Long Synopsis

New performers have recently moved into the 130-year-old building of the Riga Circus. Having built a stage in the stables, actors Ance, Āris, Klāvs, Reinis of the theatre troupe "Quadrifron" are reinvigorating and preserving the tradition of live art in the circus. The name of the group is an acronym in Latvian that conveys their ethos: they are an organization that can chill with their friends, have bursts of amazing creativity, and whose members are far from unintelligent. And all the while, the strong smell of elephants' wafts through the building. Here and there, the life of the previous inhabitants makes itself known. Soon shamanistic rituals alternate with clowning around, fortune-telling with illusion juggling, stagecraft with personal choices. Then suddenly, out of Nothing... emerges Theatre.

This film is a portrait of millennial generation, reflecting creative approach to life and testimony to human ability. One of the most famous clowns in the world Slava Polunin also illuminated the "Ring of Fire" with his presence. For him, the concept of happiness and creativity is one and the same.

Context

A few years ago, analogue cinema director Signe Birkova watched 35mm footage from the 1950s of four tigers forced to jump through a ring of fire at the Riga Circus. She discovered some parallels with theatre troupe "Quadrifron". They moved into the circus building as part of the circus changing directions in 2018. Birkova then spent two years filming on film and analogue video together with cinematographer Dāvids Smiltiņš, which resulted in a highly subjective documentary portrait of the "Quadrifron", while the theatre itself becomes a strange, albeit serious, mosaic of mysterious processes.

Director

Signe Birkova has directed short fiction, experimental and documentary films, TV programmes and created analogue film performances. For the experimental films, Birkova uses 16mm and Super 8 film, as well as different animation techniques. She has received a FIPRESCI prize at the National Film festival for her short feature "Upon Return I'll Be a Flaming Rose" (2014, Camera Obscura). In 2021 she has been granted financing from the [National Film Centre of Latvia](#) for the debut feature film "Lotus" to be produced by Studio Lokomotive.

Director **Signe Birkova**
Length **68'**
Format **16mm + analogue Betacam**
Sound **5.1**
Country **Latvia**

Released October 16, 2021 Riga IFF (Homemade premieres)

Scriptwriter Signe Birkova
Cinematographer Dāvids Smiltiņš
Editor Andris Grants
Sound Designer & Composer Edvards Broders
Animation Artist Ģirts Korps
Main Cast Ance Strazda, Reinis Boters, Klāvs Mellis, Āris Matesovičs and Slava Polunin
Executive Producer Agne Skane
Producer Uldis Cekulis

Production Company VFS Films

Supported by
National Film Centre of Latvia

RING OF FIRE [trailer]
<https://vimeo.com/630709480>