

The poster features a large, semi-transparent profile of a man's face on the left side, looking upwards. In the center, a man in a dark jacket and hat is riding a bicycle across a long, weathered wooden bridge. The background is a soft, hazy landscape. In the top right corner, there are dark, bare tree branches with colorful, abstract brushstrokes in yellow, blue, red, and pink. The title 'silent souls' is written in a large, black, lowercase serif font, and the director's name 'a film by Aleksei Fedorchenko' is in a smaller, lowercase sans-serif font below it.

silent souls

a film by Aleksei Fedorchenko

silent souls

ovsyanki

a film by Aleksei Fedorchenko



tiff. toronto
international
film festival
OFFICIAL SELECTION 2010

Russia - 2010 - 75 minutes - Color - 35mm - Scope

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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 roadtrip thousands of miles across the boundless lands. With them, two small birds in a cage. Along the way, as is custom for the Merjas, 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...



A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a white dress, is seen from the back, looking out a window. The scene is bathed in a soft, blue light, suggesting a cool or overcast day. The window frame is visible, and the background outside is blurred.

Statement from the Director Aleksei Fedorchenko

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 learnt to sing.

Miron Alekseevich, the director of a paper industrial complex from small Kostroma town Neya; Aist Sergeev, 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,



“This work became for me a personal artistic experiment. I wanted to thoroughly feel the ideal mechanisms of love. It was my construct of an ideal picture of the world.”
Denis Osokin - screenwriter

to the mysterious Merja people. The Merjans have been assimilated into Russian culture for a long time, but 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 femininity, a journey during which melancholy and tenderness fuse together.

Aleksei Fedorchenko

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

After engineering studies, he worked on space defense projects in a factory in Sverdlovsk (Ekaterinburg). In 1990, he became 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.

Filmography

- 2010 - "Ovsyanki" (Silent Souls) - feature film
- 2008 - "Bannui den" - documentary
 - "Zheleznaya Doroga" (The Railway) - feature film
- 2006 - "Shosho" - fiction video
- 2005 - "Pervye na Lune" (First on the Moon) - feature film
- 2002 - "David" - documentary

Cast

Aist	Igor Sergeev
Miron	Yuri Tsurilo
Tanya	Yuliya Aug
Aist as a child	Ivan Tushin

Directed by	Aleksei Fedorchenko
Screenplay by	Denis Osokin

Based on the novel "*The Buntings*" by Aist Sergeev

Produced by	Igor Mishin and Mary Nazari
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Director of Photography	Mikhail Krichman
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Art Director	Aleksei Potapov
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Costume Designer	Anna Barthuly
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Casting Director	Olga Gileva
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Director of Post-Production	Igor Khomsky
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Editor	Sergei Ivanov
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Sound Editor	Kirill Vasilenko
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Composer	Andrei Karasyov
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The Merjans

The Merja people (Russian: also Merä) 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 those 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, worshipped 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.



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