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### SYNOPSIS

Oscar Strok. Musician and composer who had gained a world fame with his tango music. He is the author of 300 works for violin with orchestra 1920/30 played for in the whole world. In tangos, the performers particularly were often even unaware of the author.

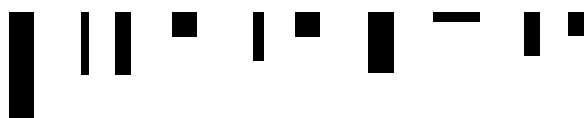
Oscar is a pianist, restaurant musician, publisher, owner of several cafes and restaurants, knife trader in a flee market, father, husband and a passionate lover, who incessantly changes his place of residence and who never has any money. Stroks music is being played from Max Weber, opera singer Fjodor Shaljapin, great Russian film director Sergey Eisenstein, passionate Argentinian Astor Piazzolla and American jazz man Luis Armstrong.

The life of the King of Tango is full of significant experiences and adventures, but the rules of this game are not being defined by the composer himself. It is a scenario offered by the first world's economic crisis with enormously high rate of unemployment and the big depression.

The story of the film about the King of Tango Oscar Strok has much affinity with nowadays. Stroks emotionally harsh, poignant and passionate tango melodies are being played In 1920s Strok plays tango in Riga, Hamburg, Berlin, Prague, Paris, Vienna, and Shanghai at the the beginning of the last century: Black Eyes, Bankruptcy, When Spring Comes Again, Don't Leave, Lunar Rhapsody, Tell me Why, Sleep, My Poor Heart, Blue Eyes, My Last Tango, No Need to Remember, Yellow Leaves, Only for you and others, have been recorded in 30 different European recording companies and played still today. Strok's tango is personal, rich in experiences and emotions like the story of his life that captivates by its faith in himself and his music.

### LOGLINE

Documentary story of the Jude musician and pianist Oscar Strok, the King of Tango in Europe 1920-1930, will be told from the lawyer, who knows all about Strok and can talk to the point. The lawyer has studied historical documents concerning his life, his enormous debts and ever lasting travels. The second in the part will be the barkeeper, who is able tell the story of the King of Tango very individual. The third will be an actress, she plays all the women parts in composers love affairs. Musicians, who are playing Stroks music are looking like himself and his group at the beginning of the last century. All of the witnesses will bring their own and some different point of view in to the story about the King of Tango, although all of them will operate with the same documentary proved material.





## AESTHETICS OF THE FILM

The form and aesthetics of the film are planned to be more auteur-cinema featured, but the plot and its romantic art allows successful communication to main public. The cinematographic story is simple in its form and rich with associations.

We are impressed by the metaphor describing the territory of the film as a piece of land which is to be won back from the commercial cinema.

## EXPOSITION

*Piano Player* begins with orchestra repetition of one of the greatest violinists, conductor of the Kremerata Baltica Gidon Kremer 2012. Ensemble is performing the compositions of the King of Tango Oscar Strok. Somewhere outside, on the wall of the high skyskriper we can see some excerpts of the silent cinema moovies and Strok himself at the piano. The film tells a story of the musician, speaking about ideals and intents of the composer and pianist, who is playing music in restaurants, bars and small film theatres, selling his notes for dance music and trying to escape from the world financial crisis. Strok is being imprisoned for his debts for several times. From the first shot to the last we return to his music full of great passion. Passion perhaps is the main plot of the film. It will be also the film about tango music and musicians, which are playing Stroks music. Some of them are accompanying silent films, tuning pianos and playing tango on dancing parties and restaurants. It is a story of the passion of tango music, which helps to find life much better as it is, living in it and with it. Stroks pain of never long lasting love and his permanent existential problems order him to write down more than 300 tangos and compositions for violin and orchestra, which are being played all over the world.

*Piano Player* tells about the lost generation, seeking for its ideals and taking deep to the heart the loss of their artist socialisation, although not resisting inward and outward emigration. It is the indirect dialogue about the passion of music and real life, a story of creative personality. Excursus in to the life story of the composer Oscar Strok, focusing on episodes with his beloved women, is the story of his music, being very individual and reaching bright audience. **Music of the King of Tango is being played by great musicians enjoying bright audience all over the Europe in the first half of the 20th century. Stroks music faszinated Max Weber in Berlin, Russian opera singer Fjodor Shaljapin, American jazz man Luis Armstrong and great Argentinian tango composer Astor Piazzolla.** The story of the *Piano Player* will be developed in similar interpretations. **On the one side these are facts of Stroks biographical-documents, mood shoots of the time, he lives, individual memories and the political background. On the other side – we have three witnesses, who are dealing with archive documents, private letters and biographical notes. One of them is the lawyer, the other one – bar keeper, and the third one – Stroks beloved woman, a dancer. Tango will be played by the musicians, who perform Stroks restaurant and bar music,**



all of them are looking like himself and his old crew members. Music of Oscar Strock cures from the destiny. Perception changes viewpoint, sense of reality, criteria of value, offering in *Piano Player* fascinated visual experience.

We shall shoot the famous violinist ensemble *Kremerata Baltica* on its repetition for the concert of the Strokes tango music too. The Famous violinist and conductor of the well known violinist ensemble – Gidon Kremer is studying the note sheets of Oscar Strok for his next European tour 2012. We can watch the musicians and the conductor by the repetition.

*The main thing for the musician is to find the harmony, which allows him on the stage to feel the heartbeats of the audience as his own and be honest to himself and his music. I know it exactly, its not so light,* says Gidon Kremer.

First Strok-is a pianist of the silent moovies. At the beginning of twenties he starts publishing a new magazine about the basics of scientific treatises *Civilization and Universe*. 1927. composer is being visited by music manager from Japan, his brother Leo. But apparently it is not the most significant event of the day. It is the day he meets a young sales-girl Lena in his own music shop. Affair with Lena is not a secret infatuation,they are seen together everywhere. Urged by Lena, Strok opens a branch of his publishing house in Paris on Rue Paestro 29 visiting his family in Riga only Fridays. On Monday morning he returns to Paris. The small flat with piano and heavy shutters for the windows is at the same time the office of his magazine *Casanova*, here he publishes the notes of tangos, romances and walses. But soon Lena gets bored by the love affair and leaves him. Oscar dedicated her his first most popular tango *Black Eyes*.

**Black Eyes open the window to Europe for Strok. Once walking along the streets in Riga, he catches the advertising poster – Concerts of Max Weber Dance orchestra, and already knows,– Weber will play his *Black Eyes* for Berlin audience. Shaljapin includes the compositions of the King of Tango into the programme of his concert tour for Paris, London, Warsaw, Prague, Vienna, Schanghai and Tokio.**

In autumn 1936 Strok himself starts with concerts in Japan, although Oscars brother's continuous criticism of his music, forces Strok to interrupt the tour and return back to Riga travelling with concerts through China. Strok has seven travel passes with three different photographs. He has about twenty several home addresses a year and was imprisoned for debts for several times. Cinema, bar





and restaurant musician Oscar Strok has written 300 melodies hummed on the streets, danced in restaurants and cafes and played at homes. However – how complicated would be the practical side of Strok's career, musicians in Europe call the *King of Tango*. **Black Eyes has been recorded by 30 different orchestras and performers in the world.**

During the second world war, as Riga is already bombed by Russians and Germans, Stroks family refugees to south Russia, where the birds are singing and apple-trees are in bloom. Everything is so quiet and placid. Here the horror of the war is hard to imagine. There he meets film-directors Eisenstein, Tisse, Romm, Pudovkin and Gerasimov. Famous artists are taking part at the shooting of concerts, where the opening phrase is, «At the piano – well-known composer, the *King of Tango* – Oscar Strok».

After the war, as Strok returns to Riga, his music is announced to be wrong for the second time and he is expelled from the Composers' Union for the second time.

Oscar Strok has learned how to manipulate with his reality to achieve the aim. He is not just only a piano player, he tries to play his life like music, like great performance, to become the star party in the classic play – his own life. Strok differs from many other composers, which have made career in soviet times, contemporaries who have just survived. He has never made any complaints about his destiny, he has tried to make his best. *Piano Player* is a film about the possibilities of perception and so different interpretations of it.



### DIRECTORS INTENT

Feature length documentary film, creative documentary about the judes pianist and the King of Tango Oscar Strok will depict the epoch when the poignantly emotional and passionate mood of tango music emerged, as well as the creative life of the pianist and the composer. It will be an insight into the controversial destiny of a creative personality and into the captivating silent film stylistics that affects the composer's perception and musical tastes. The film is to be like a kaleidoscope of facts, images and moods that build into a unified dramatic and visual narrative and follow up the time when the composer lived, the rare moments when he meets his peers, fleeing moments of love and happiness and the life full of daily worries during the times of economic crisis. Shooting locations will be chosen in France, Germany, China and Latvia to document the specific places, important for the life of the composer and to create emotionally intense, visually expressive and precise scenes of the epoch, that would provoke a feeling of presence in spectators. This film is definitely not intended anything like a TV feature, where statement follows a



statement. It will provide to the spectator an opportunity to feel empathy with Strok's creative inspirations. The assessment of Strok's tango music phenomenon will be given by GEMA experts and French musicians who will be invited to Strok's former rented flat in Paris. The synchronous statements will not overpower the mood of the film because they will be integrated in acceptable amounts to demonstrate the significance of Strok's phenomenon also today when tango is the most popular dance in the world, just like hundred years ago. Well-known musicians from Latvia – *Kremerata Baltica*, will give their evaluation of Strok's creative activities while meeting at his former summer-cottage, the entourage of which will be adapted to the times of the composer, keeping the lighting and the composition of the shot within minimalist simplicity. **The screen events**, filmed to recreate the moods of the first half of the last century will make one enter the spirit of Strok's life and creativity by building coherent narrative that renders a sense of spatially saturated screen.

**Strok's life** is marked by emotional overload; he passionately struggles for his ideals – for his music. For his life. And with his debts. He is both an entrepreneur and a publisher, he is fascinated by silent film and influenced by the harsh realities of the restaurant life. He is always in some ques and subjects himself to risk.

**The environment** in which the story of the pianist is told is visually gratifying; semi-dark rooms, heaps of note-sheets and books, restaurant kitchens and their dining rooms, somewhat dilapidated hotel rooms, 7 dusty flats in Riga which the musician changed within a year's time, a small summer-cottage by the sea, his shops and all of his restaurants.

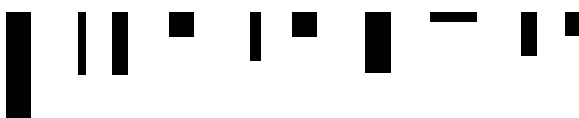
**Music** in the film will be used not only to illustrate Strok's work but also as a dramatic material to reveal the story of life of the pianist. Apart from the dramatized scenes of the epoch the historical truthfulness of the film will be strengthened by archive footage.

**The action** of the film is set in a twilight zone and the pianist character both follows the events and gets involved into them retaining his anonymity, telling a story of the pianist, who lives in the world of music and in his desperado city.

**One of the most important key points of the development of the project will be not only the dramatic plot of the story and the exact script for *Piano Player*, but also the casting of the three witnesses, who will tell the story of life of the King of Tango from some different points of view, dealing with the same facts and documents.**

[https://dl.dropbox.com/u/4317023/Oscar\\_Strok\\_\\_](https://dl.dropbox.com/u/4317023/Oscar_Strok__)

[https://dl.dropbox.com/u/4317023/Oscar\\_Strok's\\_tango\\_](https://dl.dropbox.com/u/4317023/Oscar_Strok's_tango_)



Author and director	Ilona Brūvere
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Sound editor	Victor Andrejev
Editor	Guntis Lemanis
Set design	Gints Ozoliņš
Make up	Sarmīte Balode
Kostume design	Roberts Krauze
Light	Andris Pukāns
Grafik design	Artis Rutks
Head of the Development	Artis Rutks
Cooproducer	Uwe Cardaun Filmproduction /Germany/

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