

# **LIOMPA**

Elizabeta Lazebnik

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

Graduate Program in Film Production

York University

Toronto, Ontario

January 2015

© Elizabeta Lazebnik, 2015

## **Abstract**

Shot in Russian with English subtitles, *Liompa* is a fifteen-minute dramatic film based on the 1928 short story by Russian novelist Yuri Olesha (1899-1960). *Liompa* explores the relationship between an individual and the things that he owns or desires to own throughout his life. The film looks at this relationship from the perspective of three people at different stages in their lives: a dying man, a teenage boy and a four-year-old.

The idea for the film came to me seven years ago when I read Olesha's story. Olesha is considered one of the best well-known Russian authors of the 20th century, and I was struck by the story's depth and the multiple interpretations that could be inferred from it. On the surface, the story is only a few pages in length, concerning a sick man who is trying to hold on to some sort of control of the disappearing world around him. For many, the story's deeper significance emerges only after several readings. It is a critique of how we are trained to categorize and divide and compartmentalize the world around us. The film is a visualization of this idea, exploring the effects of this conditioning on us.

A teenage boy Alexander constructs a model airplane in the kitchen. He assembles the airplane with precise, confident gestures. He sits in the kitchen while food is being prepared next to him. The potatoes and onions are peeled; eggs are boiling. In the bedroom next to the kitchen, an old man Ponomarev lies in his bed, dying. He realizes that his possessions are steadily abandoning him, and these belongings, such as boots and coats, have lost their meaning.

Back in the kitchen Alexander continues to build his plane. A four-year-old boy approaches him and starts touching Alexander's things. Alexander chases him away and, in turn, the child walks into Ponomarev's bedroom. He wanders around the sick man's room discovering

new things. When the boy leaves, most of the Ponomarev's remaining belongings follow the boy, leaving the bedroom almost entirely empty.

Ponomarev lies in the empty bedroom delirious. He hears a noise and tries his best not to categorize and name it. However his brain, heavily conditioned to do so, tells him that this noise comes from a rat. Moreover, Ponomarev feels compelled to name that "rat". He yells the "rat's" name—Liompa—a meaningless word.

Alexander is flying his model plane outside the house. A coffin is being brought into the house and the little boy says his first words: "Grandpa, Grandpa, your coffin is here!"

## **Acknowledgements**

Special thanks to my committee members:

John Greyson, Philip Hoffman and Ali Kazimi

Anna Kharkhourin, Mikhail Peternko, Ligita Lazebnik

## **Thanks**

Kuowei Lee, Marcos Arriaga, Bill Byers, Pasha Patriki, Rose Legace, Alesya Volchek

Any reader wishing to view the film *Liompa* can contact the filmmaker at [elizabethlazebnik@hotmail.com](mailto:elizabethlazebnik@hotmail.com) and request a password-protected link.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Previous Thesis Ideas.....	2
<i>Liompa</i> and Yuri Olesha.....	3
Synopsis of <i>Liompa</i> .....	3
Why I Decided to Make This Film.....	4
My Previous Work.....	5
Henry Bergson and Undivided Change.....	7
Historical and Cultural background.....	8
Influences.....	10
The Actor.....	11
The Process of Finding the Location.....	13
Cinematographer and the Film's Style.....	15
Special Effects.....	17
Production Design.....	18
Production.....	19
Editing.....	21
English vs. Russian Voice-Over.....	23
Sound Composition and Design.....	24
The Rat.....	24
Storytelling and Gender.....	25
Conclusion.....	26
Bibliography.....	28
Filmography.....	28
Appendices.....	30
Appendix A: Script.....	30
Appendix B: Production Notes.....	34
Appendix C: <i>Liompa</i> by Yuri Olesha.....	37

## Introduction

Shot in Russian with English subtitles, *Liompa* is a fifteen-minute dramatic film based on the 1928 short story by Russian novelist Yuri Olesha (1899-1960). The film tells the story of a sick man who attempts to maintain control of the world around him. *Liompa* is one of Olesha's best-known and most critically acclaimed stories. There are two additional characters in *Liompa*—a teenage boy Alexander and an unnamed child who wanders around the apartment. These three characters in the story symbolize various stages of a person's life and explore how life is portrayed and experienced at each of these ages.

Olesha was often called "the king of metaphors," and this piece boasts several magic tricks with language that he used to deepen the meaning of this story. For example, very early in *Liompa*, Olesha includes this passage: "A primus stove was being lit. At first it blazed with a luxurious life, flaming towards the ceiling then died and became a small blue flame." Here Olesha is commenting on the people igniting the stove and not just about the stove itself. Still, even the best translation could not help but lose some of the magic contained in the original Russian text. The film is in Russian with English subtitles which attempt to preserve at least some flavour and feel of the original, because otherwise this culturally-specific 'Russian' magic would be completely lost.

The visual aspect in this film is very important because it reflects my process as a filmmaker—telling stories with pictures rather than dialogue. Therefore, this support paper includes both stills from the film, as well as visual references and sources such as paintings and other film stills that inspired the look and the atmosphere of this film.

## Previous Thesis Ideas

I decided to pursue a MFA degree so that I could continue developing my filmmaking skills as well as opening the door to one day pursuing a teaching position. I went through two thesis ideas before deciding to create *Liompa*. Choosing between the two was a very difficult process. The first thesis idea was a short film about my experiences as a child in Israel during the first Gulf War. The idea reflects my interest in dealing with my work from the focus of human psychology, as opposed to a position motivated by politics. It was suggested to me that I make a more politically-inclined film, but I felt that at that point I wasn't ready to deal with this issue from the political perspective, as I was more interested in capturing onscreen the emotionally traumatic yet oddly comforting experience of being locked down in the safe room with my family. This film was important for me to make, and I ending up making it independently in May 2012. *Safe Room* had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival.

My second idea was to create a film about life in a high-rise located in Parkdale. I used to live in a high-rise in Parkdale and the neighbours on my floor were an extremely diverse group of people. For instance, there was a family from Tazhikistan, and a mentally ill lady who seemed to have a multiple personality disorder. I wanted to create a film that staged re-enactments of real encounters, where the walls of the apartments are torn down and the characters interact with each other, something that usually doesn't happen in the real life. I presented the idea during Grad Symposium in December 2011 and kept working on it until 2013, about a year after my courses were completed. However, when I finished working on the treatment, I realized that the project I would like to make would be more costly than expected and I simply couldn't afford to make it.

I spoke with my supervisor John Greyson about another project that I could work on for the thesis, telling him about *Liompa* and that I'd dreamed of making a film based on this story for a long time. John agreed to this idea and we started working on it.

## ***Liompa* and Yuri Olesha**

The idea for the film came to me seven years ago after I read a story by the Russian writer Yuri Olesha called *Liompa*. Olesha is regarded as one of the most prominent Russian writers of the 20th century. I was struck by the story's depth and several interpretations that could be made of its themes and content. On the surface, it is a story only a few pages in length about a sick man who is trying to retain some sort of control of the vanishing world around him. For many, the story's deeper meaning is illuminated only after numerous readings. It is a critique of how we are trained to categorize the world around us, dividing our experiences into discreet categories. The story explores the effects of this conditioning on us.

## **Synopsis of *Liompa***

*Liompa* explores the connection of a person to things that he owns or desires to own throughout his life. The film looks at this relationship from the perspective of 3 people at different stages of their lives. There is a teenage boy, Alexander, who constructs a model airplane in the kitchen. He is in control of his surroundings and assembles the airplane with precision and confidence in his actions.

Next to the kitchen, in one of the apartment's bedroom lies Ponomarev, a very sick old man. He realizes that his possessions are steadily abandoning him and this causes him a great



emotional discomfort, as he believes that he is the master of the things he owns. He becomes terrified when things in his immediate surroundings such as boots and coat turn into mere words. The third character in the story is a four-year-old nameless child, who wanders around the apartment. He is at the stage where he discovers things, but is not yet aware of their meaning and names. At one point, the little boy walks into Ponomarev's bedroom and starts exploring the room. When the child leaves, most of Ponomarev's remaining belongings follow him, leaving the bedroom almost entirely empty. Ponomarev lies in the empty bedroom, delirious. He hears a noise and tries his best not to categorize and name it, but his brain, heavily conditioned to function in this way, tells him that a "rat" is making this sound. Moreover, he can't help but experience a strong need to name that rat. He understands that once he comes up with this name, he will die.

At the climax of the film, he yells the "rat's" name: *Liompa!* This word is devoid of meaning, and Ponomarev utters it against his will. Alexander flies his model plane in the backyard. The little boy watches people bringing something into the house. He runs into the Ponomarev's bedroom and yells: "Grandpa! Grandpa! They've brought you a coffin!"

## **Why I Decided to Make This Film**

*Liompa* as a story is only four pages long, but despite its brevity, its depth struck me. The story questions the relationship between life and death and I feel that this is the eternal question we all face at some point. I am interested in those things we perceive to be important in our lives, and question whether what we regard as our priorities are real or illusory.

In the film, Ponomarev asks: "... At what point did we start to rely primarily on our mind, our intelligence and stopped hearing the music? When did we start dividing the world into

fragments? And replaced the life itself, its infinity with the names, language, categories. And how deeply this notion-perception is rooted in us? It is just an illusion of control? We got the control and lost the music."

In his review of *Liompa*, Jared Mobarak gives an interpretation to the film that I think reflects accurately the main idea of the film: "The short is therefore a philosophically cinematic interpretation of René Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*. It asks us to question what life is. It suggests the world itself available to us if we're willing to meet it. If we're willing to embrace the limitless possibilities of transformation into whatever our imaginations conjure or if we're held back by the encyclopedic notion of understanding above seeing.

"The new born is a young wide-eyed boy roaming the house with unfiltered glee at things possessing nuanced meaning that his innocent mind is unaware of comprehending one's idea of life is another's undoing. The boy seeks fun, Alexander strives for meaning, and Ponomarev simply wants experience in a circle of life folding back onto itself with desire always peering forward until progress loops back to the beginning." (Mobarak, "TIFF14 REVIEW: *Liompa* [2014]")

## **My Previous Work**

After completing my undergraduate program, I made six short films (*Liompa* being the seventh) and one documentary feature film that is currently in post-production. *Liompa* is a continuation of the style of filmmaking I want to continue developing. Throughout the course of producing my work, I discovered I am drawn to projects that explore stories set in the late 19th and early 20th century. I cannot pinpoint the exact reason why this particular time period has interested me so. My short *The Patient*, tells the story of a young doctor practicing medicine in

rural Ontario, and my documentary *The Multiple Selves of Hannah Maynard* explores the works of a pioneer Canadian photographer Hannah Maynard. Both of these projects are set in this same time period. I think the reason this particular time period piques my interest is because that was the time when technology was just starting to rise, but there still was a sense of magic in the world. Whether it was glass plate photography or the new advancements in medical technology such as the tracheotomy, these new 'inventions' were often regarded as miraculous.

I think my fascination with that period continues in *Liompa*. In this case, I was able to touch on the discourses of many writers and philosophers of the day who questioned how the rise of technology and industrialism connected with the rise of individualism. This was a time when it was becoming common in society to focus more on the sense of self rather than the sense of community. This need to categorize and itemize to serve the individual was set against the sense of magic of the time. This juxtaposition of reality versus magic is one the key elements that made *Liompa* the film I hoped it could be.

Another common thread running through my work is telling stories that are based wholly or partly on my own experiences. Certainly this was the case with *Safe Room*, which is partly based on my experiences sitting in a Safe Room in Israel with my family when I was a child. The documentary I am working on right now is about the transformation of Little Moscow in Toronto and it is a story I tell from a first person perspective, reflecting my own observations and insights as an immigrant from Russia (via Israel).

Over the past three years, I have sharpened my focus on new media and am taken by the idea of exploring neighbourhood spaces. Specifically, I am interested in facilitating the community's participation in telling their stories and finding means through new media to bring the collective experiences together.

These are the main themes that continually appear in my work and perhaps eventually they will somehow merge in a single film. There may one day be a project that combines my interest in historical events and my own personal and community experiences through the use of new media tools.

## **Henry Bergson and Undivided Change**

Henry Bergson is an influential 20th century French philosopher who wrote extensively about change, arguing that it is continuous and is the base of our life experience. The metaphor of music, used in Ponomarev's monologue, comes from my reading of Bergson who, in his writings, explored the importance of undivided change, and was critical of the process of dividing, naming, and categorizing our experiences. The following excerpt is taken from the essay *The Reality of Change* by John Alexander Gunn, who wrote extensively on Bergson's philosophy of change in his ebook *Bergson and His Philosophy*: "We must conceive reality as a continual flux, then immobility will seem a superficial abstraction hypostatized into states, concepts, and substances, and the old difficulties raised by the ancients, in regard to the problem of Change, will vanish, along with the problems attached to the notion of 'substance' in modern thought, because there is nothing substantial but Change. Apart from Change there is no reality. We shall see that all is movement, that we ourselves are movement—part of an elan, a pousse formidable, which carries with it all things and all creatures, and that in this eternity—not of immutability but of life and Change—'we live and move and have our being.'"

In *Liompa*, Ponomarev understands that his view of the world has been erroneous because he sees that he has lost control over things, even things that were close to him (cup, blanket) while he is still alive. He realized that the division, the categorizing, the language with

the help of which we perform these divisions are all rooted too deeply within rationalism. He also realized that his perception of the world and the idea of he being the master of his universe are artificial ways to experience the world. Life continues without him and he witnesses this while still being aware of it. He realizes that the same is true for the process of how our memories are being created. In his book, *Matter and Memory*, Bergson writes: "... we extend to the series of memories, in time, that obligation of *containing* and *being contained* which applies only to the collection of bodies instantaneously perceived in space. The fundamental illusion consists in transferring to duration itself, in its continuous flow, the form of the instantaneous sections, which we make in it. "(MM 149).

The tragedy of Ponomarev is that even after realizing the fact that our perception is rooted deeply in rationalism, he is unable to make the switch and begin to experience the world more intuitively, without the need to name and categorize and use language to do that. Hence when he hears what he thinks is a rat, he still has a need, against his will, to give it name. The name he utters is a scary, nonsensical word that he blurts out involuntarily. One of the first images that stuck in my mind was an image of a rat, which was funny and terrifying at the same time.

## **Historical and Cultural background**

I became fascinated with the story because I am interested in philosophy and thinking about how life works. I felt that this short story was very powerful in exploring the ideas of how we experience life through categorizations, language labeling and how this gives us an illusion that the more we divide, rationalize and label our experiences, the more we are in control.

I think it is a universal story and the cultural and historical backgrounds are secondary to the philosophical ideas explored in the film. The fact that the story takes place in the Soviet communal apartment makes it a great setting for the story as it explains why Ponomarev lies there alone with no relatives. He has his own room in the communal apartment and the other residents go on with their lives without paying attention to him. But technically, the story itself could have been set almost anywhere because the ideas explored in the film are of a philosophical nature. However, Olesha was a witness to the Soviet regime and was regularly subjected to censorship from it. This is largely due to the fact he openly admitted that the Soviet regime was foreign to him, that he didn't understand it, and that he felt like an outsider in it. I think that eventually, in order to get published, he used the Soviet settings or used the word *comrades* to appease the Soviet brass. However his stories, for the most part, were much more philosophical and did not focus on particularities of the Soviet regime.

As mentioned earlier, I read this story years ago and I had a strong desire to make a film out of it. Initially, I had dreamed of producing *Liompa* in Saint Petersburg, Russia but it proved extremely difficult, as I didn't have any contacts in the film industry there. In turn, years and years went by with the project stuck in my head and no closer to being made. When I received some funding to make this film in Canada, I decided to seize the opportunity and make peace with not shooting in Russia as the limited funding precluded me from shooting it there. It occurred to me that I was making a period Russian film a quarter century after the fall of Soviet Union and during a time when headlines about Putin's regime dominated the media. I was concerned that the current image of Russia would be projected onto *Liompa*. Despite these initial concerns, I was beyond excited when the film was selected to premiere at Short Cuts Canada at the Toronto International Film Festival. I was worried that the audiences would focus more on

the current Russian events rather than on the film itself. So one can imagine my relief when the questions in the post-screening Q&A were all about the relationship between an individual and the things around him and not on current Russian politics. This confirmed for me that the central theme of the film resonated with the audience. The reviews of the film were also focused on the artistic merit and I didn't see any comments about the current political situation in Russia. I truly hope the philosophical themes explored in the film continue to connect with the audience in future screenings, as this was my main focus in making the film.

## **Influences**

Perhaps the strongest influences in the making of *Liompa* were the films of Andrei Tarkovsky, specifically *Stalker* and *The Mirror*. Certainly *Liompa*'s dark and moody atmosphere is reminiscent of the atmosphere Tarkovsky created in *Stalker*, which still stands as one of my favorite films of all time. I envisioned Panomarev's bedroom being similar to *Stalker*'s bedroom in terms of the sense of decay and feeling of abandonment that is present in the room. The production designer used images of the bedroom in *Stalker* as a reference point when creating the bedroom in *Liompa*.

Magical realism is a large part of *Liompa* and often it is hard to tell whether what happens on the screen is occurring in reality or as a delusion created by Panomarev's illness. In this respect, *The Mirror* was a significant influence as the line between the dream world and the real world is blurred throughout that film. The main character in the *Mirror* reminded me of Ponomarev in that he also looks back on his life with much regret. He is haunted by what he considers to be significant failures in his life, most importantly failing to be a good father and a good son. When looking at ways to create a dreamlike atmosphere in *Liompa*, my

cinematographer and I studied *The Mirror* to get a better sense of how they accomplished this so successfully.

Another significant influence was Guy Maddin's *Tales from the Gimli's Hospital*, a film that has a surreal and often absurd quality to it. For example, there is a scene where patients are being operated on, where, in place of anesthesia, they are being shown an absurd and poorly acted puppet show. Since *Liompa* also has an element of absurdity in it with Panomarev talking to his blanket and his obsession with the rat, *Tales from the Gimli Hospital* was present in my mind when writing the script.

## **The Actor**

For this film, I knew for the role of Ponomarev, I had to have an actor with the capacity to convey the complexity of the character. Because the story is written in a very specific Russian language, the translation, while able to convey the main idea, couldn't fully describe the richness of the metaphors as written in the original language. This aspect alone dictated the necessity to find a Russian-speaking actor. The reason the film took so long to materialize was because it was nearly impossible to find an actor who was able to convey the complexity of the story while lying in bed. In the story, Ponomarev literally doesn't get up during the entire film.

Last year, I discovered that highly acclaimed actor Alexey Serebryakov had moved to Canada with his family at the height of his popularity in Russia. Alexey is a very private person and I was told getting a meeting with him would not be easy. My producer has a friend who is a very good friend of Alexey here in Canada. We approached him and asked if he would show the story to Alexey and ask him for a meeting. To our pleasant surprise, Alexey agreed to meet.



My producer wasn't available on that day and I had to go in by myself. It was quite a nerve-wracking experience but at the end of the meeting, Alexey agreed to act in the film. It was agreed that I would come into their house once in a couple of weeks and talk to Alexey about the story, Bergson's philosophy and the film.

Alexey was glad to make a film based on a classical Russian story, but I think it was when I spoke about Bergson and the metaphor of music that he became more invested in the story and in the depth of the character. We didn't have any rehearsals but after the conversation on Bergson, I felt confident we were on the same page about how we see the story and what the character is going through. I had no doubts that he would do the role perfectly but that conversation was still very important to have.

I believe there was also a factor that included me being intimidated and feeling uncomfortable rehearsing with an actor of such prestige. Picture an emerging North American director suddenly rehearsing with Robert De Niro. I think the more experience I garner, the more comfortable I will be working with top actors in the field. This experience marked the first time that I didn't engage in any rehearsal process with an actor. I now know that when working on the bigger project concerning the Parkdale apartments, I will have to make sure to have rehearsals to avoid any misconceptions on set.

For the entire shoot, here he was, literally lying in bed the whole time and even though we mapped out the major physical non-verbal acting points before filming, on set there was minimal discussion of it. This time it worked but in the future, I will make sure to rehearse. Another reason for this is that as a director, I genuinely love the rehearsal process. New ideas often come out of it and there is no need to be intimidated by the stature of the actor.

## **The Process of Finding the Location**

Finding the appropriate place with the corresponding atmosphere for this film was enormously important. In the short story, the action takes place in the Soviet Union in a communal apartment. Finding such place in Canada without building the set from scratch was impossible simply because (and thankfully) in Canada, there were no large communal spaces. I decided to find a house that was an older house, which would lend itself to the atmosphere of the Soviet communal space. Within this older house I would create the two spaces where the action took place: the kitchen, which embodies life; and Ponomarev's bedroom, which was about decaying.

Since we basically had no budget, we had to find something for about one week. That would give us two-three days of prep due to the film being a period piece, three days of filming and one to two days of cleaning and returning the space to the original condition. We looked everywhere for appropriate older houses which, in Toronto, were very hard to find. Many owners of older property are very particular about keeping it a certain way. This proved problematic, as we had to decay the bedroom and create the kitchen that would look like it is from the early 20th century, which required rearranging or swapping out furniture.

We looked at barns and country houses, but they were hours from Toronto and we would have to find a way to house everyone in the remote area and spend money on gas and cars. This was money we didn't have.

The film was scheduled to shoot in April and it was still cold outside and snowing in the countryside. My producer found a friend of a friend who said we could rearrange her country house but it was two and a half hours from Toronto. Still, we went there a couple of times in February and March. It was a lovely space but once we considered that fifteen people would be

working in this three bedroom, one-story cottage house with at least half of them staying there for two nights, we realized it was not the right choice.

We had no idea what else to do, and one day I was walking downtown, thinking there must be an old house in Toronto that we could film in. Then I saw a row of 19th century semidetached houses near Carlton and Sherbourne, right in the downtown core. These were law offices and it was clear the rent for these houses was very high. However, one of them looked like it was very old and almost abandoned. There was a sign outside that said "For Lease" with a phone number. I called that number and an older male voice answered. After a brief conversation, I learned he was the owner of the house and that he lives in Mississauga. He agreed to get the person who looked after the house to come there in a couple of days and show me the inside. I told him I could pay a little bit for a week of filming. He seemed to be intrigued and entertained by the idea.

When I arrived for our walk-through a couple of days later, the old door with dust and holes in it was already open. The inside of the house was perfect, appearing as if for years and years, no one took care of the house at all. It was old and decaying with lots of character. The place was in such a decrepit state, I was afraid to take the steps upstairs for fear of my safety.

I knew instantly I had to film in this house. The only drawback was that it had a very strong and unpleasant odour. There was clearly mould in the house, probably with mice and rats in the basement. Not long after, I found out that this indeed was the case. It was later that I realized how strong the smell was and no matter how much we aired out the house, it didn't get much better. The person who was looking after the house was very interesting as well. For over 20 years, he has been collecting things and bringing them into the house. In that house you could find everything from encyclopedias to hundreds of bike tires to underwear. The four floors were

crammed with things, which was quite ironic considering the film was about losing things. We cleared the first floor and our production designer, who was in shock when she saw the place with all the clutter and the extreme smell, soldiered on and agreed to participate in this adventure.

## **Cinematographer and the Film's Style**

In regards to crew composition, I knew that I wanted it to be split evenly between English speaking and Russian speaking so that Alexey will feel more familiar in that environment. For the cinematographer, I wanted to work with Mikhail Petrenko, a wonderful cinematographer with whom I've collaborated before. Mikhail has a great visual sensitivity and since we had a shoe-string budget, I was confident that if we completely ran out of money and left him with just a camera, he would still create wonderful images. Also, it is very important for me to work with someone whom I know and trust and with whom I am on the same page in terms of the creative and visual approach to filmmaking.

I gave Mikhail the story to read and he liked it from the beginning. At the point when I gave him the story, I'd already confirmed Alexey's participation and told Mikhail about it. I was upfront with him regarding our minimal budget but since we had the rights to a great story with a great actor, this would be more of a passion project for the key players involved. This was enough to sell Mikhail on the idea and he agreed to come on board.

*Liompa* is a story full of metaphors. In the story the objects have their own life, despite our notion that we are the masters of the things that we think belong to us. For example, in the kitchen, the pipes are quietly blowing their noses. Or the bicycle has horns and it made the scratch on the wall with its pedal. The challenge here was to find a way to visually translate the metaphors. This was tricky because everyone imagines these metaphors differently and

recreating them the way I see them would be only one way of interpreting them. By doing that, I felt like I was forcing these interpretations onto the audience.

Another option was to use animation and special effects but that required a budget and also presented the danger of coming off as tacky. Therefore, I decided to have a very specific framing with the camera moving slowly or being static, whether on the kitchen table or on the picture frames in the bedroom. We decided to choose and frame specific things such as Ponomarev's shoes, table, apple, and medicine. We'd have the camera linger on these items to allow the viewer to project their own thoughts about the objects and the environment they are in. In terms of the aesthetic, I was heavily influenced by my deep love for painting. I am usually inspired by paintings to create the mood and the look for a film and *Liompa* was no exception. I had no particular painter in mind when working on this film but the paintings of Vermeer and Rembrandt were definitely present in terms of composition, lighting and colours. For the kitchen, I wanted to have golden colours with a bit of sepia.

One thing that I wish I could have done was to have more movement in the film, because the ideas of the story imply that we are not the centre of the universe, that the universe is not still, that it is constantly moving and changing and we are part of that movement rather than the other way around. I fully realized this insight after the filming: that in order to visualize this in cinematic language, the camera needed to slowly be moving and exploring the space. I can't exactly pinpoint the reason why that didn't fully happen. Perhaps it was because I only understood this clearly after the filming and editing. Also, because of the budget constraints, I knew that we probably couldn't afford a good-sized dolly. I was thinking that it would be easier and cheaper to put the camera on the tripod and film the house as we go because I also didn't know beforehand how the house would look. Now that I think about it, I could have added

one more day and asked my friends to help out and do more careful composition of the shots, and also, do more pans using the tripod. In my planning, I was focused more on the atmosphere and the content of the film, but retrospectively, I would have loved the film to also reflect cinematically that life doesn't stay still, that it is in constant motion.

In the scene when Ponomarev lies on his bed, I would now have the camera exploring the room through motion because he realizes that the universe doesn't stop as he is dying, that the universe continues to live its own life and he is not in control. Movement is very important because this is also part of Bergson's theory of undivided constant change. However, I was more worried about the bigger picture and the pacing, which I wanted to be slow and meditative. On the day of the shoot, Mikhail got a small dolly but my headspace wasn't there. Part of this stemmed from the fact that I was co-producing, and especially closer to filming I was immersed into the technical and practical logistics of the production. My producer's children became sick and she couldn't be on set, so that wasn't helpful either.

## **Special Effects**

The only special effects I decided to use was for Ponomarev's interaction with his blanket and when the little boy is leaving the room and the objects follow him. These two moments were important because I felt that they introduced the required contrast with the “real world.” Because apart from that, the film is grounded in reality and the line between Ponomarev's delirium state and the more objective perspective is blurred.

With the blanket, we simply put a person underneath it and asked her to move in a variety of ways. In post-production we reversed the shot and it gave the movement of the blanket a ghostly look. When things leave Ponomarev, we actually placed the items on the fishing line and

filmed them one by one in a static camera position. After that, my vfx/editor took the footage and combined it. But because it wasn't a studio shoot, the lighting changed throughout the shots and so he had to rotoscope the objects frame by frame.

## **Production Design**

In regards to the production aspect, I was determined to find someone who is not only a great production designer but who would also understand this specific story I am trying to tell. The Production design for *Liompa* demanded not only the re-creation of the early 1920s period but also a specific atmosphere in the house. This includes the kitchen with bustling life and the bedroom where everything from the walls to Ponomarev's shoes are in the state of decay. This progressing state of decay throughout the film all had to be done on a \$1,000 budget. Mikhail was a great resource for potential production designers and one of the candidates he recommended was Rose Legace. Another friend had recommended her as well so I decided to contact Rose who agreed to meet shortly after the call. Rose read the story in advance and I could tell that she got it and that she had a good understanding of what I was looking for. When she saw the house, I think she was a little taken aback by its state and the mould and smell in it. Interestingly, the production designer and the location proved to be the two toughest pieces of the puzzle to lock down and we found both only a few short weeks before going into production. One of the reasons why I wanted the production to take place sooner rather than later was because Alexei was going to Russia and to the Cannes Film Festival in May and I wanted to make sure that we had completed everything, including the recording of his voice over, before then.

In regards to the props, it was important for me to have a bed with an old texture and an early 20th century look. The texture of the bedroom's walls was also important as well as Ponomarev's belongings: shoes, clothes, books, diaries, etc. Rose was working on another project and by the time she went to buy props, it was two days before the shoot and she still had to prepare the house itself. Basically, I had to trust that she would do her job well. That trust was not misplaced. I was very happy with the bed and the belongings she acquired for the bedroom. The only snag we hit was the fact that the wallpaper I wanted wasn't going to fit into the budget. To compensate, Rose put plaster onto the walls which created a nice texture and then put colour on top of it. Our reference was the stalker's bedroom in Tarkovsky's *Stalker*. When Rose researched the bedroom in *Stalker*, she realized that they used the technique of combining plaster and colour.

## **Production**

The filming itself went smoothly except for one incident where working with a bare-bones crew cost us. I had a great crew and it was truly helpful to be working with people I'd worked with before, including Mikhail and Anna Kharkhourin, my co-producer. However, we didn't have a DMT (Data Management Technician) who was dedicated to looking over and transferring the footage. We were filming on the RED camera, rented by Mikhail from a small production company who did us a favour.

On the second day my editor, who was also doing special effects, was transferring the footage. I don't actually know whose fault it was, but an incident occurred which created tension that has only recently been overcome.



I had a cold while directing and the house environment with its dusty air and mould wasn't helpful. My producer Anna's children were sick (she has a three-year-old son and a one-year-old daughter), they had high fever and she had to stay at home most of the time to look after them and therefore I only had one AD on set. Mikhail had only one assistant the second day and my editor was busy with special effects and running around helping. He was transferring the footage from the second day to another drive. According to the editor's account of what happened, later that day he was transferring footage to the computer when he saw that the files either didn't transfer or they showed an error after they were transferred. He said that he texted Mikhail however neither Anna nor I heard anything about this from either Mikhail or the editor. Clearly, something was wrong, and he really should have made sure that he reported the problem to either Anna or me.

We all know each other, we all respect each other and everyone was working basically for free or very little money. Why I was told about it only the next day during lunch break escapes me. In hindsight, I should have stayed after the day's shooting to make sure the footage was there. I was sick and I told my producer, who also wasn't on set, that during the filming I didn't want to do anything with the technical aspects of production. I have now learned that I needed to do that or have a person dedicated solely to transferring files on set and making sure they work. By the time I was told about the corrupted file transfer, it was the last day of filming and Alexei was wrapped. Essentially, most of the second half of the film's files was corrupted. Alexei said before that if necessary, we could call him back and, in retrospect, I should have. But in the moment I was shaken, I was very upset and I didn't feel comfortable asking him back.

Put simply, I was in shock. I thought it was all over, as we couldn't afford to reshoot half of the film. After some thinking and a shot of vodka, I decided to put Alexey's costume on my editor and film him in bed, without seeing his face of course. We re-shot all the footage of the room when the room is gradually becoming more empty and decayed. What you see in the second half of the film is re-shot footage of the room and footage of my editor lying in bed. What you see on screen of Alexey's face is the handful of seconds of the footage that was not corrupted. It was literally a couple of seconds. I was putting the film together without ANY coverage in the second half. I didn't have any takes to choose from. The original footage wasn't recovered even though on set I was told we probably could recover the RED footage. Magically, through editing, it all somehow came together and worked in the end. I feel very lucky. We didn't tell Alexey about what happened, as I felt embarrassed about it.

## **Editing**

The post-production phase was quite intense. Due to the lack of budget, the editing was done at my editor's home. He was doing it on his off-time with two little kids running around. We finished the filming in early April and the editing, along with the special effects discussed above, were completed two months later. As mentioned earlier, it was more of a part-time editing process given the editor had another job and little kids to look after.

The little boy in the film is actually the editor's son and it was interesting to see how he reacted to himself on screen, especially when we were replaying the scene over and over again: "Grandpa, Grandpa your coffin is here!" A lot of the time he was hanging on his father when we were editing. I do realize now that it is not possible to work in the same space where kids are present. I didn't feel comfortable telling the editor to have the kids go somewhere else while we

were editing as he was doing it for very little money. But the added stress and anxiety, in addition to the fact that there was not enough footage, was cumulatively taking its toll on me.

My editor's main job was doing VFX and while he did do some editing in the past, it became clear that editing was not his main specialization and he wasn't 100 percent familiar with the workflow. We decided to convert the RED files from raw to pro res, which I later found out was a standard procedure anyway. He suggested to work off the raw files and started working on the first half of the film while my producer Anna was contacting RED and another company who claimed they could recover the corrupted files.

The first scene of the film is the kitchen scene, which has no dialogue or continuity. I was saying from the beginning that I wanted the film to have slower, contemplative rhythm where the audience could have enough time to immerse themselves into the film's atmosphere. We had no trouble choosing the shots of food, the kitchen itself, people's hands, etc.

The idea was that the kitchen has life in it. I wanted the colours to be golden yellow. Every shot was important, whether it was a table full of food and people peeling the potatoes, adding more fresh food to the table, or boiling eggs on the stove. We don't see the rat hustling in the garbage but we hear its presence right from the beginning of the film.

The last shot of the kitchen in the first scene is a shot of the camera panning from the fire to the room, which has dark blue quality to it, and the contrast between the life and death is stark. In the bedroom, the quality of the image changes. The colours are no longer golden—they are blue-gray. The important focus of this scene was deciding which belongings of Ponomarev to choose and how to frame them. I decided to create painting-like still shots, showing the stillness and decaying nature of the room. I filmed his shoes, coat, paintings, diaries, and window.

We used this sort of dynamic throughout the film when interchanging between Ponomarev's room and the kitchen. One thing that I really wished I could have done more of was to include more slow movement in the film. The idea of the short was that we don't own anything and that everything constantly changes and we are by no means masters of that change, we are part of that change. However, due to the aforementioned budget restraints, I couldn't afford a dolly or Steadicam in the production.

### **English vs. Russian Voice-Over**

This was a very interesting process in the making of the film. I knew from the beginning that we would have no or very little dialogue in the film and that most of the film would be voice-over. Because of that, I knew from the beginning that I wanted to have two versions—one Russian and one in English. I preferred people looking at the images and hearing Ponomarev's voice, rather than reading the subtitles. The monologue is quite lengthy and it seemed like the right thing to do and that this would be easy to do, because it's a short film and it's just a voice over without dubbing. For the Russian language version, I recorded Aleksey and he did everything great from the first take. It was actually quite amazing to watch a great actor at work.

However, the first version that we were preparing was the English-language version, intended for the English speaking festivals, and so I sought to record male actors in the age range of Alexey. The strange thing was that the voice-over in English just didn't work at all! I recorded four actors, one of them being a very well-known Canadian actor who agreed to do it for free. Since there was no studio I could afford, we recorded it in his basement. There he had an authentic Clint Eastwood director's chair that Eastwood gave him after the filming of “Unforgiven”. He let me sit in it, which I was only too happy to do. We did the recording and he

did a good job but the film was still somehow losing its magic. It sounded too much like a PBS commercial. I do have both a Russian and English version of *Liompa*, but even Canadians suggested I went with the Russian version only, with subtitles. So I decided that the Russian version was the one to use.

## **Sound Composition and Design**

We put out an ad for a composer and numerous people replied ready to work for free. Since I didn't know any of these people and had no recommendations to go from, I decided to work with one who was living within walking distance from my house. As it turned out, practicality led to a stroke of good fortune. The composer/sound designer's name is Joshua Hamming and he turned out to be amazing. I highly recommend him. He is a musician and relatively new in this field but for this past year, he has been creating sound design and composing music. He also needed to create sound effects, which he started on before we even met. I had no idea what to expect but when I came to his place, he played for me exactly what I was looking for. Sounds of wood, boiling water, kid's steps, whistling, it was all there!

We spoke about the film and the intentions and he just got it. I was very pleased to hear the first draft of music and sound design. It was too dramatic at the end so the main thing we worked on was making the soundscape more subtle. I was truly impressed with his composition of the classical music use in the film and the disturbing sounds at the scene where Ponomarev says "Liompa" work really well.

## **The Rat**

We had a half-day of pick up shots at the house. One of the key pieces of feedback I received was to film more of the rat. We also had to film the middle boy flying his airplane, which was a fun thing to do. We rented a rat from a shop and they weren't too surprised about the request. This part was going to be difficult for me given my lifelong phobia of mice. I wasn't sure how I would handle working with a rat. We built a rat cage in one of the rooms and Mikhail had fun filming it. I had a hard time watching it, especially when he was filming the macro parts. Also looking at it during the editing wasn't very enjoyable. However, I've probably overcome my fear of rats a little after having gone through that experience.

The rat is a very important part of the story—after all the film is named after it—but I didn't want it to be obvious, apart from hearing and seeing bits of it throughout the film.

## **Storytelling and Gender**

Upon finishing the film, quite a few people told me that the film is masculine and asked me why I decided to make a story from a male's perspective. When I make a film, I am usually conscious about the politics of gender representation because there is a large disproportion in the number of stories told from a woman's versus a man's perspective. However in this case, I really loved the story and the themes that it explored. I do believe that our society is rooted within cause-and-effect conventions of rationalism, and that language is used to help contain and rationalize our experiences. Along with many thinkers such as Plato and Locke, I agree that this way of perceiving the world, characterized by our need to give everything a reason, and to compartmentalize our experiences, was established during the 17<sup>th</sup> century when science began to rise, especially after Newton's discoveries in laws of motion. In the short story there is even a reference to Newton. However, in part because of these discoveries, our society began to

compartmentalize, and started to ignore the bigger picture, the chain of life. Olesha reminds us that the apple doesn't only fall from the tree; it is not an isolated event. In the short story, Newton is sitting in the garden and near him; insects on the ground are eating the fallen apple.

I was thinking at one point to cast a girl as the child who runs around the house, in an effort to make the cast more equal. However, partially because there was no time to find a proper girl and partially because I do think that it is a story that explores the way our world's way of experiencing life has been consolidated during the rise of science when patriarchy was at its height, I decided to leave all three characters male.

## **Conclusion**

Looking back at the entirety of the undertaking, *Liompa* was without doubt a very difficult experience. It was the first time that I experienced a lack of money as a huge obstacle in my creative process. I had heard that it is hard to make period pieces on a shoestring budget but I actually didn't realize how hard it was until I experienced it firsthand. I was counting on my friends for help and even though our friendships survived, they were strained for quite a long period of time after the filming. It is my seventh short and I can't say that I have learned a lot, but an important take-away from the experience was that I feel I knew what I wanted and I was more confident in my directing skills. With *Liompa*, I have achieved what I wanted in terms of the look, the atmosphere, the acting and the content of the film. I am also just grateful that the film was completed.

I feel the film works in general, but I think it could have reflected the ideas about movement that I've discussed better if there was slow movement constantly throughout the film. For future projects, I will be making sure that the idea of the story is fully reflected in the

cinematic language.

Someone once said that making a film is like taking an Old West stagecoach ride. At first you're hoping for a pleasant journey and by the midway point, you're just praying that you make it through alive. This was certainly true of making *Liompa*. And yet, despite all the financial and technical difficulties that I had to overcome, there were many more positive aspects to this experience. I continued to explore my interest in period films and pushing the boundaries of the traditional narrative structure. The experience of making this film has made me even more confident in my capabilities as a director. I know I will be more at ease working with actors and communicating my vision to the crew as a direct result of my experience making *Liompa*.

I will treasure forever the experience of having a film premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival. Even though the film was made during the time when Russia is under Putin's regime, the geopolitical aspect did not contaminate the audience's reaction to the film. The response from both the Canadian public and critics has been very positive and has focused on the aesthetic and artistic merits of the film. In the end, there is nothing more a filmmaker can ask for.



## **Bibliography**

Barratt, Andrew. Yury Olesha's Three Ages of Man: A Close Reading of "Liompa", The Modern Language Review Vol. 75, No. 3 (Jul., 1980), pp. 597-614. Modern Humanities Research Association

Bergson, Henri. Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness 1910. (Essaisur les données immédiates de la conscience, 1889). Dover Publications, 2001.

Bergson, Henri. Matter and Memory, trans. N. M. Paul & W. S. Palmer(New York, Zone Books, 1991).

J. Alexander Gunn, Bergson and His Philosophy, ebook,  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5717/5717-h/5717-h.htm>, May 2004

Mobarak, Jared. TIFF14 REVIEW: Liompa , September 2014.  
<http://www.jaredmobarak.com/2014/08/28/liompa/>

## **Filmography**

*Meshes of the Afternoon*, Maya Deren, 1943

*Nostalgia*, Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983

*Stalker*, Andrei Tarkovsky, 1979

*Mirror*, Anderi Tarkovsky, 1975

*Tales From the Gimli Hospital*, Guy Maddin, 1988

*Archangel*, Guy Maddin,

*The Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, Michel Gondry, 2004

*8 ½* , Federico Fellini, 1963

*Time of the Gypsies*, Emir Kusturica, 1988

*Colour of Pomegranates*, Sergei Paradjanov, 1968

*Werckmeister Harmonies*, Bela Tarr, 2001

*Terry Gilliam, Brazil, 1985*

*David Lynch, Lost Highway, 1997*

*David Lynch, Inland Empire, 2006*

*Alejandro Jodorowsky, The Holy Mountain, 1973*

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Script

SCRIPT

*LIOMPA*

INT. KITCHEN.DAY

The boy ALEXANDER, 12, is planning wood in the kitchen. A rat jumps onto the garbage can. The people in the house are frying finely chopped potatoes in the kitchen. Eggs are jumping up and down in the pan of boiling water. The tap is quietly blowing its nose. Then somewhere upstairs the pipes begin to talk in several distinct voices. The tap chattered away. From around the stove came rustlings and sharp crackling sounds.

INT. OLD MAN'S ROOM. DAY

In a room near the kitchen lay OLD MAN, desperately ill. He lay alone in the room. There are only a few things around the sick man; the medicine, a spoon, light, wallpaper. Everything else disappeared. Toward the nightfall he becomes delirious.

When he learned that he was desperately ill and dying, and how few of them remained in his power. Every day the number these things decreased. A familiar object like a railroad tick had already become irrevocable distant. At first things decreased toward the circumference, far away from him; then they decreased as they drew ever nearer to him, as they approached the centre, as they approached his hear; coming through the courtyard, the house, the corridor, into the room.

At first the disappearance of things did not fill the sick man with grief. Countries disappeared, America, the hope of being rich and handsome, of having a family (he had never married)... His illness had nothing to do with the disappearance of these things: they slipped away as he grew older. But he was grieving when he realized that the things that had once moved in step with him were beginning to move away, further and further away. On one day they deserted him: the street, his word, the mail, horses...and now their disappearance came with an immediate violence, very close to him—already the corridor had escaped out of his power—and in his own room, under his very eyes, his coat had vanished, and so had the door bolt, and his shoes had lost their significance. He knew that death, as it came to him, was destroying things. Out of the whole cast and superfluous number of things, death allowed him to retain only a few and these were things which, had it been in his power, he would never have permitted in his house. He had things forced upon him. He received terrible visits, terrible glances from his friends. He knew he had no

strength to resist the invasion of those things, which seemed to him unnecessary and uncalled for. But for now they came singly, irrevocably. He had lost the right to choose among them.

OLD MAN (VOICE OVER)

Almost everything disappeared...  
How did it happen? ... Think about it...  
it started happening when... I realized  
that I fell seriously ill... that I am dying ...  
And... this huge world of things ... How  
little of its left (in my life)! But...at first,  
I didn't feel this sadness.... Countries  
disappeared, opportunity to be rich, to have  
a family... but they disappeared gradually,  
with age... not because of the disease...  
I was convinced that external world does not exist...  
I thought that my eyes, my ears, hands control things.  
That my brain defined those things, that it gave  
them shape, weight, color, meaning. And ...  
That everything will cease to exist when  
I cease to exist! ... but... everything turned away from me...  
from being still alive... Only names, meaningless names  
of all these things keep spinning in my brain...  
but what use do I have from these names?

The blanket lay close to him and went to bed beside him; it would go away and bring back the latest news.

OLD MAN (to the blanket)

Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

INT. KITCHEN. EARLY EVENING

The boy Alexander is making a model airplane. He was a more serious and complication boy than the others gave him credit for. He cut his fingers, bled profusely, littered the floor with shavings, and smeared everything with glue. He begged for pieces of silk, cried and received slaps. The grown-ups, of course, thought they were right to do this. Meanwhile the boy behaved in a completely mature way—in fact, in a way which only few adults can ever follow: he acted in complete accord with science. The model had been constructed according to the diagram, he had calculated everything—he knew the scientific laws.

All around him were little bands, bits of wire, sheets of plywood, strips of finely woven silk, the color of tea roses, the smell of glue.

Another LITTLE BOY, 4 years old, came up to the boy who was working on the airplane. He touched things, interfered. Alexander pushed him away. The little boy, who seemed made of rubber, darted about the house, and went along the corridor till he came to the bicycle. The bicycle was leaning against the wall by its pedal. On the wallpaper the pedal left a scratch. It was as though the scratch on the wallpaper was holding the bicycle to the wall.

#### INT. OLD MAN'S ROOM

The small boy went in to see old man. The child's head loomed near the edge of the bed. The sick man's temples were white like the temples of a blind man. The boy came close to old man's head and examined it. It occurred to him that in the world it always had been and always would be like this—bearded men lie in bed in a room. The boy had only just learned to recognize things. He could not yet distinguish the divisions of time in their existence.

He turned and began to walk about the room. He saw the inlaid flagstones, the dust under the skirting boards, the cracks in the plaster. Around him lines joined and moved; shapes came alive. Suddenly he saw the reflection of a sunbeam, and ran toward it, but he had hardly moved before it was out of focus again—and the boy looked behind him, up and down, behind the stove, searching and confusedly through his hand and finding nothing. Every second created for him something new. Piano music is heard.

As things vanished out of sight, for the dying man they left only their names.

#### OLD MAN

Someone... what was his name? He compared our life to music...When we listen to music we don't break it down into separate sounds. If we only listen to the individual sounds, and think that this is music, it will be an illusion.... false reality. At what point did we start to rely primarily on our mind, our intelligence...stopped hearing the music ... When did we start dividing the world into fragments? And replaced the life itself, its infinity with the names language, categories? And how deeply this notion-perception is rooted in us... It just and illusion of control ... We got the control, and lost the music ... The Way of losses! What happened to intuition, a complete and unconditional perception of life with the entire body and soul? ...

#### OLD MAN (to the boy)

Come here. Listen ... When I die, everything will disappear, nothing will be left. No yard,

no trees, no houses, no Dad, no Mom. I will  
take everything with me. Even you.

With infinite longing old man watched the boy who was walking about the room. Things rushed to meet him. He smiled at them, not knowing even one of their names. He went away, and the splendid train of things flew after him.

INT. OLD MAN'S ROOM. EVENING.

A rat found its way into old man's room.

Old could hear it as it made itself at home, scratching the floor, making noises.

Then it occurred to him that the rat might have a name of its own, unknown to anyone. He began to invent name for it. He was delirious. The more he tried to think of a name for it, the more closely was he gripped with terror.

OLD MAN

She certainly has some name ... Nothing comes  
to mind ... I have to think... I have to figure it out...  
What am I doing? As soon as I give this senseless,  
useless, terrible name to it, I'll die... I need to stop ...  
don't think!

Suddenly, in a choice of terror, he cried out:

OLD MAN

Liompa! Liompa!

EXT. COURTYARD. DAY

The boy Alexander ran through the courtyard. His model airplane is flying up in the air, in front of him.

INTERIOUR. KITCHEN. DAY

Later in the day a blue coffin with yellow facing appears in the kitchen. The little boy watches from the corridor, his hands clasped behind his back. It required a long time and took all sorts of maneuvers to get the coffin through the door. It scraped against a shelf, knocked over a saucepan, and there was a shower of plaster. When at last they got into the corridor, it turned black. The little boy, shuffling in his sandals, runs on ahead.

LITTLE BOY (shouting)

Director: Elizabeth Lazebnik

Producer: Anna Kharkhourin

Production Manager: Genya Protsko

1<sup>st</sup> AD: Genya Protsko

## Appendix B: Production Notes

### LOCATION:

**173 Carlton St Toronto, ON M5A 2K3**  
<https://www.google.ca/maps/place/173+Carlton+St/@43.6633804,-79.3720962,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x89d4cb4f20f52c11:0xafccb318a45685b4>

### Nearest Hospital:

Women's College Hospital  
76 Grenville St  
Toronto, ON M5S 1B1

WEATHER: Rain      HI: 7°C LO: 2°C      WIND: E 30 km/h      POP: 100%      SUNRISE:6:56 am SUNSET:7:48pm

SCENE	SET / DESCRIPTION	D/N	CAST	PGS.	LOC.
	<b>INT. BEDROOM</b>		1		
Scene #2	Ponomarev, blanket 3-5 Insert shots (camera panes or dollies across)	D		1/4	1
BEDROOM	MS of the man. He speaks to the blanket WS of the man. He speaks to the blanket (SFX Shot)				
	<b>INT. BEDROOM</b>		1, 2		
Scene#3	Ponomarev and Rubber Boy. Coverage of man talking to rubber boy	D		1/4	1
BEDROOM	Shots of the boy wandering around the bedroom not paying attention to the man POV of what boy sees in the room				

CHARACTER	CAST	P/U	ON SET	OFF SET	LOC
1. Ponomarev	Alex Serebryakov	8:40 am	9:00 am	5:00pm	1
2. Rubber Boy	Alex Romanov	OWN	2:30 pm	7:00pm	1

Hey there, hey there! Your coffin has arrived!

1st AD	Eugenia	7:00 am	<b>Grip &amp; Electric</b>		
<b>Art Department</b>			Gaffer	tba	7:00 am
Set Designer	Rose	7:30 am	Key / Dolly Grip	Max Vlasenko	7:00 am
<b>Props</b>					
Key Props	Olesya	7:30 am			
<b>Makeup / Hair</b>			<b>Sound</b>		
SE MU	Ashley	8:20am	Production	Kirill Belousov	8:00 am
<b>CRAFT SERVICE</b>					
		<b>Number</b>	<b>Hot &amp; Ready @</b>	<b>Serve @</b>	
Lunch (Cast, Crew)		14	12:00pm	12:30pm	
<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>IN</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>IN</b>

Set Cell: 416 527 3089

# Liompa

Saturday April 5  
Day 2

Shooting Call: 9:00 am

Lunch: 12:30pm

Ex. Producer: Elizabeth Lazebnik

Director: Elizabeth Lazebnik

Producer: Anna Kharkhourin

Production Manager: Genya Protsko

1<sup>st</sup> AD: Genya Protsko

**LOCATION:**

**173 Carlton St Toronto, ON M5A 2K3**  
<https://www.google.ca/maps/place/173+Carlton+St/@43.6633804,-79.3720962,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x89d4cb4f20f52c11:0xafccb318a45685b4>

**Nearest Hospital:**  
 Women's College Hospital  
 76 Grenville St  
 Toronto, ON M5S 1B1

**WEATHER:** Cloudy      **HI:** 4°C **LO:** -1°C      **WIND:** W 30 km/h      **POP:** 30%      **SUNRISE:** 6:54 am **SUNSET:** 7:48pm

SCENE	SET / DESCRIPTION	D/N	CAST	PGS.	LOC.
	<b>INT. BEDROOM</b>				
Scene #4	Shots of the boy wandering around the bedroom not paying attention to the man	D	2	1/4	1
BEDROOM	POV of what boy sees in the room				
	<b>INT. BEDROOM</b>				
Scene#4	Things are flying out from the room, following the boy.	D		1/4	1
BEDROOM					
	<b>INT. BEDROOM</b>				
Scene#4	Shots of man left alone in an EMPTY room, he hears the rat and screams LIOMPA. Falls on the bed and as his life coming to an end he sees a boy playing with a plane trough the crack of the window curtains.	D	1	1/4	1
BEDROOM					

CHARACTER	CAST	P/U	ON SET	OFF SET	LOC
1. Ponomarev	Alex Serebryakov	12:30	1:00 pm	7:00pm	1
2. Rubber Boy	Alex Romanov	OWN	9:00 am	1:00pm	1

Director	Elizabeth	8:30 am	A/C	Stephan	8:00 am
DoP	Mikhail	8:00 am	SFX	Alex Romanov	9:00 am

1st AD	Eugenia	8:00 am	<b>Grip &amp; Electric</b>		
<b>Art Department</b>					
Set Designer	Rose	8:30 am	Key / Dolly Grip	Max Vlasenko	8:00 am
<b>Props</b>					
Key Props	Olesya	8:30 am			
<b>Makeup / Hair</b>			<b>Sound</b>		
SE MU	Ashley	12:30pm	Production	Kirill Belousov	9:00 am

<b>CRAFT SERVICE</b>					
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Serve @</b>			
Lunch (Cast, Crew )	12	3:30pm			

DEPARTMENT	NAME	IN	DEPARTMENT	NAME	IN
Director	Elizabeth	9:30 am	A/C	Stephan	9:00 am



Set Cell: 416 527 3089

*Liompa*

Sunday April 6  
Day 3

Shooting Call: 10:30 am

Lunch: 3:30pm

Ex. Producer: Elizabeth Lazebnik

Director: Elizabeth Lazebnik

Producer: Anna Kharkhourin

Production Manager: Genya Protsko

1<sup>st</sup> AD: Genya Protsko

**LOCATION:**

**173 Carlton St Toronto, ON M5A 2K3**  
<https://www.google.ca/maps/place/173+Carlton+St/@43.6633804,-79.3720962,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x89d4cb4f20f52c11:0xafccb318a45685b4>

**Nearest Hospital:**  
 Women's College Hospital  
 76 Grenville St  
 Toronto, ON M5S 1B1

**WEATHER:** Sunny      **HI:** 11°C **LO:** -2°C      **WIND:** SW 15 km/h      **POP:** 0%      **SUNRISE:** 6:53 am **SUNSET:** 7:50pm

SCENE	SET / DESCRIPTION	D/N	CAST	PGS.	LOC.
	<b>INT. KITCHEN</b>				
Scene #1	4-6 M.C.U. insert shots of the objects/activities in the kitchen. M.S. shot of the boy making a plane.	D	2, 3	1/2	1
KITCHEN	From last CU shot we pan/dolly to reveal the bedroom				
	<b>INT. KITCHEN</b>				
Scene#3	MWS,MCU of Boy continues to build the plane, rubber boy bothers him and goes to the bedroom.	D		1/4	1
KITCHEN					

CHARACTER	CAST	P/U	ON SET	OFF SET	LOC
2. Rubber Boy	Alex Romanov	OWN	11:00 am	5:00pm	1
3. Boy	Stepan Serebryakov	10:30 am	11:00 am	6:00pm	1

DoP	Mikhail	9:00 am	SFX	Alex Romanov	9:00 am
-----	---------	---------	-----	--------------	---------

1st AD	Eugenia	9:00 am	<b>Grip &amp; Electric</b>		
<b>Art Department</b>					
Set Designer	Rose	7:30 am	Key / Dolly Grip	tba	9:00 am
<b>Props</b>					
Key Props	Olesya	8:30 am			
			<b>Sound</b>		
			Production	Kirill Belousov	10:30 am

## Appendix C: *Liompa* by Yuri Olesha

Alex was shaving strips of wood in the kitchen. The cuts on his fingers were covered in edible, golden scabs.

The kitchen jutted out into the yard. It was spring, the doors were left open, grass was growing up around the threshold; water flashed, spilling on the concrete. A rat fell into the wastebasket. In the kitchen, small sliced potatoes were frying. The stove was lit. Its life began magnificently: from the torch to the ceiling. It died a wee blue flame. Eggs jumped in the boiling water. One lodger was frying crayfish. He picked the fish up by the waist with two fingers. The fish was greenish, the color of water pipes. Out from the faucet flew, all of themselves, two or three droplets. The faucet demurely blew its nose. Then upstairs a few of the pipe's voices began to converse.

All of a sudden, twilight took shape. A single glass on the windowsill continued to shine. The glass received through the gate the last beams of the sun. The pipes conversed. About the stove came various cracklings and stirrings. The twilight was spectacular. Outside, people were eating sunflower seeds, singing could be heard, and yellow light from the rooms fell on the pavement outside; a bench shone.

In a room neighboring the kitchen lay the heavily ill Ponomorjov. He lay alone, the candle burning. A flask of medicine stood over his head, and from it stretched a prescription receipt. When friends came to see Ponomorjov he would say: "Congratulate me, I'm dying." Nights he became delirious. The flask looked at him. The prescription stretched from it like a train. The flask was a duchess bride. The sick man, in his delirium, wanted to draw up a treatise. He argued with his blanket: "Well, aren't you ashamed? ..." he whispered. The blanket sat awhile, lay down, left, came back with news.

A number of objects surrounded the sick man: medicine, a spoon, a lamp, wallpaper. The rest had left. Only when he realized that he had really fallen ill and was dying did he understand how great and various was the world of objects, and how little of that world remained with him. With every day his collection grew smaller. The most familiar objects, railway tickets for example, had already become irrevocably distant. At first, this collection of things receded only at the periphery, relatively far from him; then, this blight drew closer and closer to the center, to himself, to his heart—his yard, his house, the corridor, his room.

In the beginning, the disappearance of these objects didn't evoke much regret. From him flew countries, America, the possibility of becoming handsome or rich, of having a family (he was a single man).... To the disappearance of these things his illness bore no relation: they slipped away with age. The real pain only came when it became clear to him that those things that in the past had always moved even with him were now moving away from him. So, one day his street, his work, the post office, his horses, all abandoned him. Following swiftly came the disappearance of the hallway and, in his own room, before his very eyes his coat, the bolt of the door, and his boots all ceased to have meaning for him. He knew: death, on its way to him, was

clearing the path. Of all the great and celebrated world of things, death had left him very little, and these of the sort that he would never, had he still such powers, have included in his list of last things. He retained his bedpan. He retained the awkward solicitations of his acquaintances. He felt powerless to protect himself against the invasion of uninvited and unessential, as it seemed to him, things. Just as things now stood in his way singularly and indisputably, he had lost his ability to appoint them.

Alex was making a model airplane. He was far more complicated and serious-minded than people realized. He injured his hand cutting, bled profusely, littered the floor with shavings, spread glue all over, scrapped for a piece of cloth, cried, and received a slap on the back. The adults always reserved for themselves all the authority, and the boy too styled himself adult-like, and, even more, stove toward what not even most adults adhered to: he conformed his behavior stringently to scientific principles. He constricted his model strictly by the blueprint, in accordance with known principles. If he chose, he could have used his knowledge and experience to opposed the grown-ups, but he was silent, for he didn't consider it proper to elevate himself above the adults.

Settled about the boy were various rubber straps, wire, beams, cloth, teashop fabric, and the heavy smell of glue. The sky was sparkling. Insects crawled about on the concrete and, within the stone, shells had petrified. Another smaller boy came up to Alex, this boy altogether tiny and naked in dark-blue underpants. He began to touch everything and disturb the model airplane. Alex chased him away. The naked, almost rubbery boy wandered about the house and came down the corridor where a bike stood. (The bicycle was leaning against the wall on its pedals. It had made a scrape on the wallpaper. It was if the bike was holding on to the wall by its scratch.)

The small boy approached Ponomorjov. His head loomed by the bedside. The man's temples were white and somehow blank, like a blind man's. The boy regarded him from above with curiosity. To him the world was and always had been like this: a bearded man lies down in bed in his room. Objects had only recently begun to enter the boy's consciousness. He couldn't yet make distinctions in the occasions of their appearance.

The boy turned and began to walk around the room. He saw the parquet floor, the dust on the baseboards, the cracking plaster. The world around him was made up and divided into lines and living bodies. Catching sight of a trick in the light, the boy hurried toward it but with the first step the change in perspective destroyed the illusion. He searched around for it, above and behind and underneath the stove, and finally shrugged his shoulders in confusion; he lost it. But every second brought him something new and wonderful. A spider surprised himself. It flew away ahead of the boy's very desire to catch it. To the dying man, the departing objects of the world left him only their names.

At one time there was an apple. It flashed on the tree, revolving ever so slowly, and as it turned it caught up with it pieces of the day—the blueness of the garden, the windowsash. Beneath, the laws of gravity lay in wait on the black earth, on the hillock. Beady black ants ran to and fro. Here also sat Newton. Inside the apple was hidden a great number of causes with the potential to provoke an even greater number of effects. But not one of these effects was intended for

Ponomorjov. The apple had become an abstraction for him. And that which the outer peel of things hid from him, of which only an abstraction remained, had become painful for him.

“I thought the outside world didn’t exist,” he pondered, “I thought it was my own sight and sense that governed things; I thought that once I ceased to exist the world would cease to exist too. And yet, how firmly everything turns its back on me while I yet live. I am still here! Why then do they leave me? I thought it was my own brain that gave them form, weight, and color, but see how they have left of their own accord and only their names—useless names! empty husks—swarm around in my brain. What use are they to me?”

With grief Ponomorjov regarded the child. The boy took a single step, and a world of objects simply streamed towards him. He smiled on them, not knowing even one of their names. And when he left, a voluptuous train of objects flowed after him, trying to outdo one another for his attention. “You listen,” Ponomorjov called after him, “listen.... You know, when I die there won’t be anything left. No yard, no tree, Papa, Mama. I’m taking everything with me....”The rat entered the kitchen. Ponomorjov listened: the rat acted like it owned the place, it rattled the plates, turned on the faucet, rustled around inside the wastebasket.

“Ah, what a machine,” he thought. Then a disquieting thought came to him: perhaps even the rat had its own name, unknown to human beings. He tried to think what sort of name that would be. He had entered a delirium. And as he thought he was gripped by a stronger and stronger terror. He understood that he was breaking up, that he should stop trying to think of the rat’s name. Even so he kept on, knowing that at the very moment that he found this singular, senseless and terrible name, at that moment he would die. “Liompa!” he cried out in a horrible voice.

The house slept. It was the earliest morning, just starting six. Alex was still awake. The kitchen door was opened out into the courtyard. The sun was still somewhere below. The dying man walked about the kitchen, bending at the waist and stretching out his dangling wrists. He was trying to pick up things to take with him. Alex ran out into the yard, the model airplane flying before him. It was the last thing Ponomorjov saw. He couldn’t take it with him. It flew away.

In the afternoon a blue coffin with yellow trimmings appeared in the kitchen. The rubbery boy watched from the hall, his hands behind his back. The coffin was long at turning every which way to get through the door. It bounced against the shelf, the pan, the crumpling plaster. Alex climbed onto the stove and helped, supporting the chest from underneath. When the coffin finally got through to the hallway, suddenly turning black, the rubbery boy, his sandals slapping, ran on ahead,

“Hey old grandpa!” he called, “They brought a coffin for you!”