

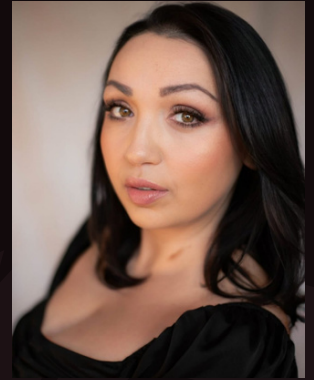
ROZKVET

Press Release

Filmmakers launch crowdfunding campaign for World War Two drama highlighting the Romani Holocaust.

BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND, 26th April, 2024. Independent film production company, Lamb Films, will launch the crowdfunding campaign for their most ambitious project to date. Set in occupied Czechoslovakia, *Rozkvet* tells the story of a woman's struggle to save her family from Nazi oppression. The film aims to shed light on the lesser known history of the persecution faced by the Roma/Romani people. The team believe that the production presents a unique opportunity for an authentic portrayal of the Romani people, who remain underrepresented in mainstream media and, when they are, it is often in a negative light, perpetuating racial stereotypes.

The film's star and co-producer, Katarina Kokenyova, is from a Roma background and has been instrumental in developing the screenplay in a manner authentic to her culture. In 2006 she and her family moved to Northern Ireland, largely due to the lack of employment opportunities for Roma in her native Slovakia. Since then she has re-established her career, ultimately securing representation with a Belfast and London-based acting agency and appearing in multiple national television campaigns.



Katarina Kokenyova

"Bringing this story to life is very close to my heart, as sadly it is still very relevant. When most people hear the word "gypsy" it usually brings negative images to mind. We hope to show our people in a different light than they are usually portrayed in the media and most importantly to commemorate all those who lost their lives fighting against injustice."

Other members of the production include producer Larry Cowan and director/co-producer, Thomas Pollock, who in the past have collaborated on several successful short films and documentaries, as well as having previous experience facilitating arts-based community programmes with marginalised communities. The film was written by Belfast-native Andrew McNeill, who initially wrote *Rozkvet* as a play performed in the Sanctuary Theatre, Belfast in 2023.

As independent filmmakers, the team have decided that crowdfunding is the best avenue to bring their ambitious vision to life. This allows them to work more flexibly, whilst maintaining control of the story and doing justice to the real-life events that inspired it. A concept scene highlighting the quality they can achieve has already been completed and can be viewed online at their crowdfunding page.

Lamb Films welcome all levels of support and to show their appreciation to prospective donors, they are offering rewards, such as exclusive artwork, behind the scenes content, invitations to a preview screening, as well as set visits and executive producer credits for larger contributors. The team aim to start production in July 2024 across Northern Ireland.



Thomas Pollock



Larry Cowan



Andrew McNeill



FURTHER INFORMATION

- The Roma (also known as “Gypsies” in English, although some consider this a slur) have suffered discrimination and persecution since their arrival in Europe during the Middle Ages.
- This persecution reached a peak following the rise of the Nazi party, during which they were stripped of their citizenship, subjected to violence and imprisonment, finally escalating to state-sponsored genocide in extermination camps.
- It is difficult to assess the actual number of those murdered in the Romani Holocaust (1933–45), as no accurate pre-war census figures exist. Estimates range as high as 1.5 million, roughly 75% of Roma living in Nazi-controlled territories.
- In spite of recovering to become Europe's largest ethnic minority, collective rights for Roma remain elusive. Negative stereotypes persist and contribute to issues such as societal ostracism, widespread poverty, segregation, violence and murder.
- *Rozkvet* aims to bring attention to this forgotten history, as well as the fact that those targeted by the Nazis were not simply helpless victims and that many did in fact resist their deadly occupation.



KICKSTARTER

The crowdfunding campaign will run from April 26th to May 26th 2024 and is available worldwide. If you want to learn more about the project or show support head on over to <https://kickstarter.com/profile/rozkvETFilm>

The team also welcome direct contact via the following:

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Poster and Graphics by Caitlin Joyce



Lamb Films Ltd