



The Damned and the Sacred - Docspace Electronic Press Kit

1. Short Synopsis

A group of child dancers from Chechnya use their art as a means of survival—and an act of defiance in the face of the terrible tragedy occurring in their homeland. Images of the ravaged city of Grozny reveal the harsh conditions in which the children nevertheless manage to perform. It is clear these children don't simply want to dance; they have to dance to keep themselves sane. Coached and encouraged by one exceptional man, Ramzan Akhmadov, the children undertake a tough tour of Europe with triumphant performances at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and London's Lyric Theatre.

2. Synopsis

The Damned and the Sacred concerns a dance ensemble from the ravaged Chechen city of Grozny. We followed the group, comprised of children between the ages of six and sixteen, on their tour through Europe, filming them in Amsterdam, London, Krakow and Warsaw and during their journey in a bus through Europe and Russia.

The film shows the children practicing in the rubble of Grozny and performing in Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and London's Lyric Theatre.

The images are touching. The children seem to be saying: "everything around us is in ruins, but we are dancing: we exist." It becomes clear in the course of the film that these children not only want to dance, but must dance, in order to find a release for their overloaded nervous systems; it truly keeps them from going mad. We see a boy dancing even though his knee has been dislocated. A girl literally collapses during a performance.

What began as a an apparent celebration emerges, by the end of the film, as a desperate attempt to go onto a stage and say: "we're here - look at us - we exist." In this sense, the group's performing becomes a metaphor for the horror of a daily reality in which these children could disappear from one moment to the next.

3. Credits

THE DAMNED AND THE SACRED
Original language title: DANS, GROZNY DANS

Country of production: Netherlands
Year: 2002
Language: Chechen, Russian
75 mins.

A breathtaking portrait of a civilian population in wartime, THE DAMNED AND THE SACRED presents the current Chechen war through the perspective of a traditional youth dance troupe, its coach, and others in its circle. As they witness bombings



and cope with checkpoints and unfamiliar soldiers, the troupe members stubbornly prepare a tour of western Europe. One of the tour's goal is to show that Chechens are just ordinary people. This film, however, reveals people who are anything but ordinary: talented, dedicated, and shockingly professional given both their ages and the conditions surrounding them. Featuring exciting and often thrilling dances, **THE DAMNED AND THE SACRED** presents a group of people struggling in the most modest and non-confrontational way to declare and maintain their cultural independence.

Director: Jos de Putter
Script: Jos de Putter
Cinematography: Vladas Naudzius
Music: Vincent van Warmerdam
Editing: Stefan Kamp
Sound: Tom d'Angremond
Producer: Frank van den Engel
Production Company: Zeppers Film & TV and IKON
Source:
Frank van den Engel
Joh. Verhulstraat 174
1075 HC Amsterdam, The Netherlands
zeppers@xs4all.nl

Jos de Putter has directed films including **IT WAS A LOVELY DAY** (1993), **SOLO, THE LAW OF THE FAVELA** (1994), **THE MAKING OF A NEW EMPIRE** (1999), and **BROOKLYN STORIES** (2002), among others.

4. Biography of Jos de Putter

1993 *Het is een schone dag geweest (It was a lovely day)*
(Ikon) 16 mm 70 minutes

Awarded the Prize of the City of Utrecht (*Nederlandse Filmdagen*) for the year's best debut film. Selected as the year's best Dutch film by the *Filmkrant*, a leading Dutch film magazine, and by the readers of *De Volkskrant*, one of the Netherlands' leading daily newspapers.

Festivals: Rotterdam, IDFA, Paris, New York, Göteborg, Los Angeles, Sydney, Johannesburg.

1994 *Solo, de wet van de favela (Solo, the favela's law)*
(VPRO) 16 mm 55 minutes

Winner of the Joris Ivens Award for best film, IDFA, Amsterdam.
Festivals: Rotterdam, IDFA, Paris, Sao Paulo, Nyon, Thessaloniki, Munich, Teheran, Sydney, Vancouver, Jerusalem, Bombay.

1996 *Nagasaki Stories*
(Ikon) 16 mm 55 minutes

Awarded the jury prize at the Teheran film festival.



Festivals: Rotterdam, Nyon, Bombay, Teheran.

1999 The making of a new empire
(NPS) 35 mm 78 minutes

Awarded the L.J. Jordaan Prize, 2000
Nominated for the Golden Calf as best documentary; nominated for the KNF Prize.
Festivals: Toronto, Berlin, IDFA, Rotterdam, Göteborg, Florence, Sao Paulo, New York, Minneapolis, Thessaloniki, Karlovy Vary, St. Petersburg, Munich, Taiwan, Vienna, Bilbao, Leeds, Rio de Janeiro, Jerusalem.

1999 Zikr (ism Clara van Gool)
(NPS) video 7 minutes

Winner of the Dance Screen Festival, Monte Carlo, 2000.
Nominated for best short film, NFF, Utrecht.

2000 Noch zijn ezel (*Nor his jackass*), part of a series on the Ten Commandments.
(Ikon) video 50 minutes

Festivals: IDFA, Marseille, Paris, Jerusalem.

2002 Dans, Grozny dans (*The Damned and the Sacred*)
(Ikon) 16mm/DV 74 minutes

A film about the young members of the Chechen dance group Daymokh. Amidst the destruction and the barren environment in Grozny, they practise their dances that have passed on social and cultural patterns throughout the centuries. Together they prepare for a tour that will take them to a world that is radically different from their own: Western Europe.
Festivals: IDFA, Rotterdam.

2002 Brooklyn Stories
(NPS) 16mm 54 minutes

A film about the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Giants from Manhattan: the tale of the unequal battle of rich against poor, that was eventually won by the underdog. The victory of the Dodgers, however, ended when the owner decided to move his club to Los Angeles, leaving Brooklyn behind broken hearted.



5. Photographs

5.1 Jos de Putter (Director)





5.2 From 'The Damned and the Sacred'



