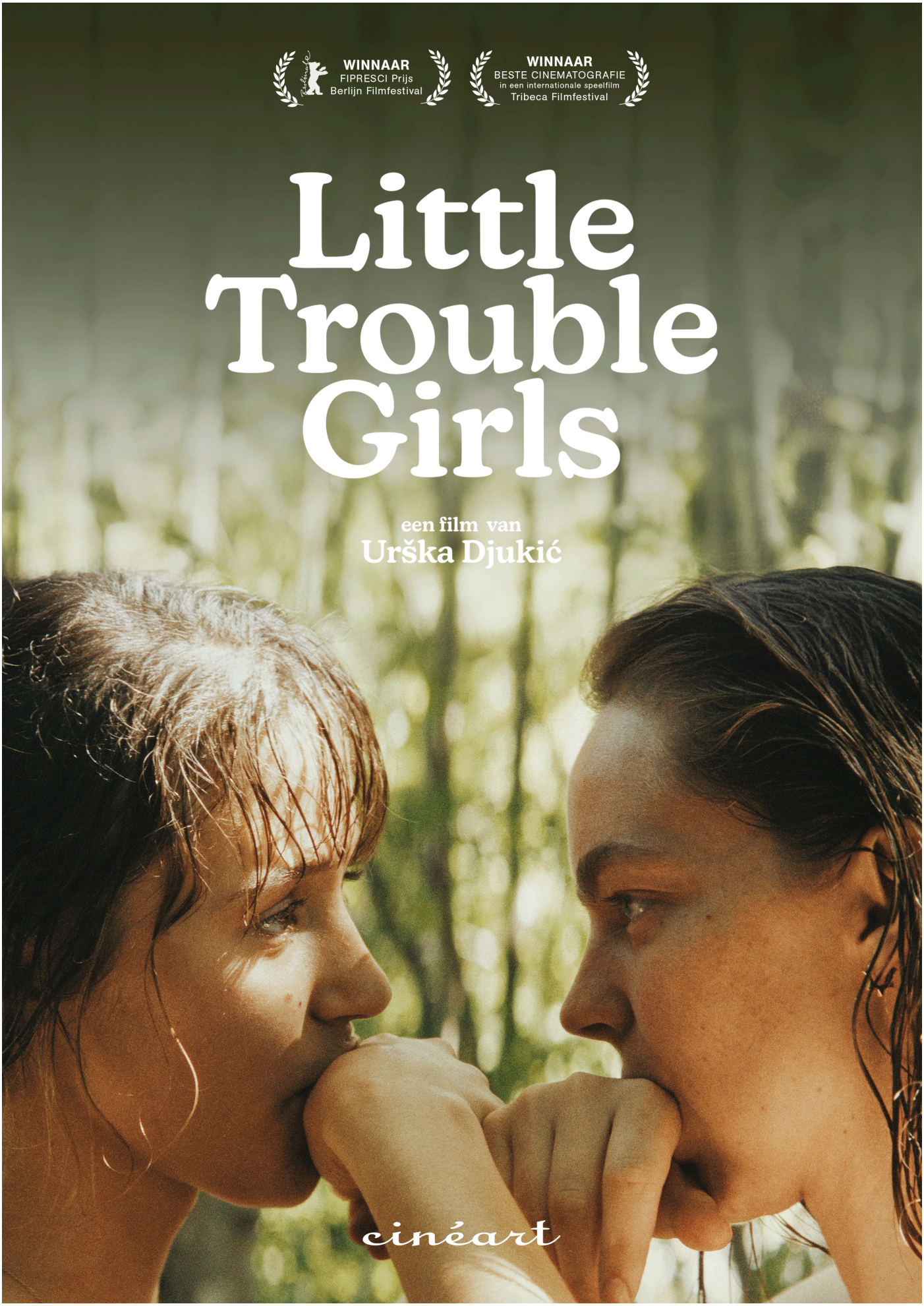

WINNAAR
FIPRESCI Prijs
Berlijn Filmfestival
WINNAAR
BESTE CINEMATOGRAFIE
in een internationale speelfilm
Tribeca Filmfestival
Little Trouble Girls
een film van
Urška Djukić
cinéart

PERSMAP





Little Trouble Girls

een film van
Urška Djukić

Drama - 2025 – Slovenïe - 89 minuten
Bioscooprelease: 30-7-2026

Meer informatie: Cineart.nl/films/little-trouble-girls
Download persmaterialen: Cineart.nl/pers/little-trouble-girls

Distributie
Cinéart Nederland
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Synopsis

LITTLE TROUBLE GIRLS is een sensueel en intiem coming-of-age drama over seksueel ontluiken en katholieke schaamte. De film is het indrukwekkende regiedebuut van Urška Djukić.

De introverte 16-jarige Lucia (Jara Sofija Ostan) sluit zich aan bij het meisjeskoor van haar katholieke school, waar ze bevriend raakt met Ana-Maria (Mina Švajger). Het koor trekt naar een klooster op het platteland om te repeteren. Al snel wekt een van de bouwvakkers die het klooster restaureren Lucia's interesse op. Dit stelt de vriendschap met Ana-Maria en de andere meisjes op de proef. De onbekende omgeving en haar ontluikende seksualiteit brengen Lucia van haar stuk en zetten het koor onder druk.

LITTLE TROUBLE GIRLS kreeg de FIPRESCI Award op het Filmfestival Berlijn en en won Beste Cinematografie op het Tribeca Filmfestival. The Guardian gaf de film 5 sterren en Variety schreef: 'A quiet hothouse of youthful desires, mean-girl tensions and hovering Catholic guilt'.





Director: Urška Djukić

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Urška Djukić's most recent short film Granny's Sexual Life has won over 50 awards, including the European Film Academy Award for best short film in 2022 and the 2023 Cesar Award for best animated short film. Previous short films by Djukić also include The Right One, part of the omnibus film SEE Factory Sarajevo mon amour that premiered at the Cannes Directors' Fortnight in2019. In 2019, Djukić participated in the 39th edition of the Cannes Cinéfondation Residency, where she developed Little Trouble Girls, which was later awarded as the best work-in-progress project at the Les Arcs Film Festival in December2023. Little Trouble Girls is her first feature film.

FILMOGRAPHY

Little Trouble Girls, 2025, Slovenia, Italy, Croatia, Serbia
Debut Feature, director and co-writer
World Premiere: Berlinale, Perspectives Competition

Granny's Sexual Life, 2021, Slovenia, France
Short Animation, director, co-writer and editor
World Premiere: Ottawa International Animation Festival

The Right One, 2019, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Short Fiction, director and co-writer
World premiere: 51th Quinzaine des Réalisateurs

Bon Appétit, La Vie!, 2016, Slovenia
Short Animation, director and writer
Best Short Film – 19th Festival of Slovenian films 2016



INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR URŠKA DJUKIĆ

When did you start thinking about this film what was the original spark for the idea?
The initial spark for the project came in 2018, when I saw a concert by a Slovenian girls' choir. When I first heard them sing, my eyes immediately filled with tears. I was deeply moved by the power of their voices, teetering on the edge of awakening their womanhood, to the point where I had to hold back my emotions to avoid breaking down in the middle of the concert. There was something profoundly important about the force of these young female voices, often silenced throughout history. There were also three priests sitting in the audience, who were just as moved as I was. This struck me as an unusual scene: adult men living in celibacy, listening to girls radiating awakening sexual energy. I felt this was significant for me, and I needed to explore the theme and my emotional response through the medium of a feature film. I began by observing the choir and researching its dynamics, which initially inspired my screenplay. Later, we formed our own project choir to continue the work.

So, you specifically created a new choir for the film? How did you choose the songs?
Yes, exactly. We held auditions for young female singers and selecting about 30 girls, along with our four chosen actresses who had little to no singing experience. Then the hard work began. The choir was directed by a great musician, Jasna Žitnik, who also mentored actor Saša Tabaković to conduct and lead the choir in the film.
I was particularly interested in Slovenian folk songs that could complement the scenes with their content and atmosphere. For the film's finale, we used a very old Italian prayer suggested by our collaborator, vocal artist Irena Tomažin. Together with selected singers, she adapted and performed it in scenes where the sisters sing in a cave and under a waterfall. This piece had such a powerful resonance that it moved even the toughest men on the crew during filming. Everyone could feel the energy of this ancient cleansing prayer. The film concludes with the iconic song Little Trouble Girl by Sonic Youth, which inspired the film's title and perfectly ties together its narrative and thematic essence.



This film feels deeply personal; there's a sense it draws from intimate experiences. At the same time, it features many Christian elements: the monastery, nuns, and a conservative family dynamic. How personal is this story and what were some starting points for your approach?

I began by exploring the female voice, which has been silenced so often throughout history. This led me to the awkward relationship with sexuality, sin, and feelings of guilt. Through a sensitive young girl shaped by societal conventions of sinfulness, I wanted to delve into how a young person finds their own inner power.

These feelings of guilt surrounding natural instincts are something I personally experienced while growing up. Although my family wasn't strictly religious, my mother raised me according to traditional Catholic ideas of what a "good girl" should be like. Later, I realized these ideas, imposed on many generations of girls, including mine—particularly those regarding body image, shame and sexuality—are rigid and clumsy. With Little Trouble Girls, I wanted to explore the mysteries of the senses as tools for understanding ourselves. I think the long-standing taboo around sexuality has left us still unable to fully understand or harness its potential power. The body has its own instinctive intelligence, guiding us if we listen carefully. The concept of sinful sexuality and the lack of education around it is a clever mechanism to disconnect individuals from their inner source of power. I'd say its important to allow ourselves to hear and trust our intuition, even when it contradicts societal norms. People deeply connected to their bodies are less easily controlled because they trust their internal guidance more than external directives.

In the film, Lucia questions her inner, physical sensations against societal norms and expectations that shape and limit our behavior. Ultimately, through a transcendental, cathartic bodily experience, she decides to listen to her intuition rather than the dogmas.

Lucia stays true to herself, but, in today's world, it can still feel like sexuality is still a taboo topic, or at least that certain adults want it to remain taboo for young people.

When I presented my previous film Granny's Sexual Life to high school students at Cinema Dvor, one of the teachers came up to me afterward and said, "Oh, I'm so glad you openly talked about this topic because we've had problems at school. I had to go explain to the principal why we're showing films about sexuality and discussing them with students." She said that some teachers had even protested against students watching such films and were scared about having to talk to them about sexuality. This surprised me. Even today, in 2025, some people are afraid to talk about sexuality? This just confirms that the awkward attitude toward sexuality is still very present in our societies. I think it's really important to talk about openly and clearly. Now, after the #MeToo movement, we've finally started discussing where the boundaries are, what's allowed and what isn't. Only now are we beginning to understand that silence, awkwardness and shame actually perpetuate sexual abuse.



How did casting go? Did you already have a very clear idea of the character, or did you find those qualities in the actress later? What were you looking for in your lead and how did you find it?

I was looking for a girl who was at that transitional stage from girlhood to womanhood. I wanted someone with grace, something that radiates, something bright. When working with actors and other collaborators, I usually start with what they naturally have and select them based on their life experiences.

I chose Jara Sofija Ostan during a casting we held for this purpose. Even when I first looked at around 60 short video presentations of young actresses who applied, I immediately knew she was the one —Lucia. I could see right away that she had something magical: she seemed like an old soul trapped in a girl's body, slowly awakening. There's a certain sadness in her eyes that makes her more sensitive than others.

As we worked, she opened up and started giving so much. She worked with many coaches and teachers to reach the level she displayed in the film. It was fascinating how, at the start of our work, our acting coach Nataša Burger noticed that Jara's arms hung beside her body as if they weren't connected to the rest of her. Only through the process of acting did Jara begin to understand her body, truly feel it, and perform through it. Over the course of a year, she underwent significant personal development, and we captured that transformation in the film.

In this process, I learned the importance of going with the flow and folowing where the material leads me. If I tried to push Jara in a direction that wasn't true to her, it didn't feel authentic. So I adapted the script to suit her character. I used this approach with all the actors. Mina Švajger (Ana-Maria) was selected in a similar way—her blue eyes embody a wild and fearless young woman who was the perfect contrast to Lucia's gentleness and shyness. I saw them as yin and yang energies, complementary and part of one whole.

How did you envision that relationship between Lucija and Ana-Marija? It's quite elusive—at times, it feels like more than just friendship.

For me, Lucia and Ana-Maria represent one person—two sides of the same individual. One is the more rational, intellectual aspect, while the other is instinctual, more "wild." I wanted to play with informal rules and question them, suggesting that sexual energy isn't rigidly tied to whether the other person is of the opposite sex. Lucia is confused about where this attraction comes from and questions what's right or wrong, creating tension and a sense of guilt within her. What is it that draws us to others? Often, it's not necessarily a desire for a sexual relationship. Maybe we're drawn to something someone has, that we lack, but wish to possess. Or something that we need to learn. That's also sexual energy.

The relationship between Lucia and Ana-Maria is based on this dynamic. Lucia is drawn to something she doesn't have and doesn't yet understand, something that represents the path she must take for her personal development.

Sound is an extremely important element of the film. The film begins with sound — breathing, actually- and then what seems like an abstract image.
Yes, the introduction is breath, which connects you to your body. The film opens with an old illustration of Christ's wound, which resembles a vulva. These illustrations have always fascinated me. The image is from a small 14th-century prayer book made for the Duchess Juta of Luxembourg. Around the wound, tools of Christ's torture and punishment are depicted, representing his defiance of the dominant system. At the same time, this mysterious image metaphorically resembles a vulva, which, as Gustave Courbet famously said, is the origin of everything. This image leads you inward —through pain, it guides you into the body, where our essence resides...

What stands out above all is tenderness. Especially the tenderness and fragility of your main character, who has that look of sincere wonder; she feels everything very intensely, wants to know, she is open to connecting with the world; and yet she's still afraid of it.
Tenderness was an important concept in making this film. At one point, I said this word: TENDERNESS to every collaborator - that this is the word that guides our work. It may sound idealistic, but I believe tenderness in this world can overcome harshness—it's stronger.

Interview conducted by Ana Šturm



ABOUT THE PRODUCERS

SPOK Films was established in 2016 by Jožko Rutar, who previously worked as producer at STARAGARA Production and was managing director of Slovenian Film Centre in period between 2011 and 2016. SPOK Films is dedicated to discover and promote new talents of Slovenian cinema worldwide as well as world cinema in Slovenia and South Eastern Europe. The focus of the company is dedicated towards development, production, promotion and distribution of high end art-house films as well as offering wide range of various consulting's on the film field, including animation training and promotion though CEE Animation network.

Cast

Jara Sofija Ostan	Lucia
Mina Švajger	Ana Maria
Saša Tabaković	Conductor
Nataša Burger	mother
Staša Popović	Klara
Mateja Strle	Uršula
Saša Pavček	sister Magda
Irena Tomažin Zagoričnik	singing nun
Damjan Trbovc	priest
Matia Cason	naked man



Crew

Directed by	Urška Djukić
Written by	Urška Djukić, Maria Bohr
Produced by	SPOK Films (Slovenia)
Co-produced by	Staragara It (Italy)
	365 Films (Croatia)
	Non-Aligned Films (Serbia)
	Nosorogi(Slovenia)
	OINK(Slovenia)
Associate Production	Sister Production (France)
Producers	Jožko Rutar, Miha Černec
Co-producers	David Cej, Matteo Oleotto, Katarina Prpić, Dragana Jovović, Stefan Ivančić, Ognjen Glavonić, Marina Gumzi, Urška Djukić
Associate Producer	Julie Paratian
Cinematography	Lev Predan Kowarski
Editing	Vlado Gojun
Production Design	Vasja Kokelj
Costume	Gilda Venturini
Make-up	Eva Uršič
Sound Design	Julij Zornik
Sound Mixing	Ivan Antić