

A Million Yard Stare

Director's statement

As a father, I have seen the light in a child's eyes—and I also saw that light dim in the faces of Ukrainian refugee children. This film was born from that gaze. We talk a lot about war in terms of politics, but I wanted to focus on the invisible war: the emotional exile children carry within them.

"A Million Yard Stare" doesn't offer answers. It offers silence, sorrow, and sometimes music — because that's how trauma speaks. The film travels between the violence of a war-torn homeland and the quiet resilience of a child trying to smile again in a foreign place. Through art and movement, this story becomes one of fragile healing.

Germany and Ukraine share the frame, but this story could belong to any child forced from home. I made this film for those who look at refugees with judgment. I want them to see the cost—not in numbers, but in eyes.

Background stories

CIRCUS

"A Million Yard Stare" grew out of a close collaboration between our film team and a local circus club long active in integrating refugee children from war zones.

CHILDREN

To keep the film truthful and rooted in real experience, we trained participating children — many of them refugees, including the film's lead actress — for three months both in front of and behind the camera.

REFUGEES

More than 100 refugees contributed to the production, bringing their stories, gestures and resilience to the screen.

PEOPLE-DRIVEN

This is a film made with the people it portrays: intimate, community-driven and quietly political.

Above all, it is a testament to how art and human connection can begin to mend the hidden wounds of war.

Logline

A mother longs to see his smile when war robs him of his childhood

Synopsis

When war leaves young Roma numb with the "million yard stare," his mother Oxana fights to heal him. Turning to circus training as a last hope, she embarks on a journey of resilience, love, and healing, striving to bring back Roma's laughter while facing her own buried trauma.

Long Synopsis

After fleeing the war in Ukraine, young Roma and his mother, Oxana, arrive in a foreign country—safe but shattered. Once full of life, Roma has retreated into silence, his gaze fixed in a thousand-yard stare. The distance seems even greater for Roma as if he is a million yards away from the boy he used to be.

Oxana, holding tightly to the hope of seeing her son smile again, pushes aside her grief, focusing all her strength on helping him heal. She takes a leap of faith when a psychologist suggests that the circus—a world once shared with Roma's father—might reach the boy where words cannot.

Amid the swirling colours of the circus world, Roma meets Elias, a boy who carries his own story of loss. The two bond slowly, but the darkness behind Roma's eyes does not lift. When Oxana has a bitter argument with their host, Nicole, Oxana is forced to confront the grief she has long denied.

With the circus show approaching and emotions pushed to the breaking point, Oxana faces one final, desperate question: Can this fragile space of friendship, art, and truth be enough to reach her son, or has the war stolen his smile forever?

Technical Specification s

Title A Million Yard Stare

Production Company Webfilmland Productions

Pengel & Kumar GbR

Year of Completion 2025

Country of Origin Germany

Languages English, Ukrainian, German, (Russian)

Subtitles English, German

Genre Drama, Anti-War

Running Time 93 Min.

Aspect Ration 2.35:1

Frame Rate 24 fps

Shot on Panasonic EVA-1 & BGH-1

Delivery Formats DCP, ProRes, H.264

Sound Format Stereo, 5.1 Surround

Sound Mix Theatrical

Premiere Status World

Production

Film meets Circus





The collaboration between Träumer, Tänzer und Artisten and Webfilmland Productions on the production of "A Million Yard Stare" has proven to be a powerful partnership. The experienced circus performers brought their creativity and talent, while Webfilmland contributed its filmmaking expertise in direction and production. This fusion of circus artistry and cinematic technique allowed the film's artistic vision to be realized at a high level, giving the project ist unique energy and expressive power.

Financially supported by



Cultural department of the City government Garbsen



State-government Lower Saxony

Director

Director's biography

Ravi Gautam, a creative multi-talent in the roles of screenwriter and director, combines his academic background in physics with a passion for vivid storytelling. Preferring practical creativity over abstract theory, he has forged a unique path in cinema where structure meets imagination. From his early youth, Gautam captivated audiences on the stages of the Himalayas with engaging stories, before his journey carried him more than 6,000 kilometres into film production. His talent for gripping narratives and unforgettable characters first came to fruition in 2018 with the short film Die Brücke, which he directed.





As the founder and CEO of the production company Webfilmland, Gautam continues to shape original and socially resonant cinema. His feature Soch: A Perception (2024), which confronts misogyny and religious hatred, was honoured in 2025 with the Best Debut Director Award at the Ayodhya Film Festival and the Director's Vision Award at the 22nd Indian Film Festival Stuttgart, establishing him as a bold new voice in socially engaged cinema. In *A Million Yard Stare* (2025), Gautam fuses realism and surrealism to portray a child and mother scarred by war.



Director's filmography

2018

Die Brücke (39 Min.)

Writer & Director

2024

Soch: A perception (100 Min.)

Writer & Director

2025

Un Abrazo (17 Min)

Producer

A Million Yard Stare (93 Min.)

Writer & Director







Daria Petrozhytska

Known in Ukraine and among Ukrainian refugees in Germany for her lead role in the hit series "Papik", Darya's talent extends beyond acting—she also earned second place on Ukrainian Idol, showcasing her versatility. This further solidifies her rising status as a talented actress in both film and television.

2019 Nichnyy Shvydkyy2019 Papik2020 Mysholovka dyla kota2020 Data Vogas

2020 Date Vegas

2018 Zaryazhennie

2021 Burshtynovi

2021 Dzhek & London

2022 Spravzhnii Santa

2022 The Best Weekend

2022 The Wild

2024 Yashcho chesno

Oleksandr Melnikov

Oleksandr Melnikov arrived at "Träumer, Tänzer und Artisten" as a refugee from Ukraine, quickly impressing with his ability to shift seamlessly between serious and joyful emotions. This versatility made him an ideal fit for the role of Roma in "A Million Yard Stare". Over the course of three months, Oleksandr was trained by director Ravi Gautam as part of the "Startklar für die Zukunft" funding program, which prepared him for his role. His natural talent, combined with this focused training, enabled him to bring depth and authenticity to his performance.





Riccarda Richter

Riccarda Richter, winner of the Best Actress Award at the Indie Short Fest in Los Angeles, brings her experience and star power to the role of "Nicole" in "A Million Yard Stare". With her extensive acting background, she transforms Nicole into a multi-layered, emotionally rich character. Her commanding presence and ability to portray complex roles elevate the film, showcasing her as a charismatic and seasoned actress.

2006 Professor T2018 Die Läusemutter2019 Die dreifache Schnur

2022 Baba Kush2024 TatortColonius (aka Der Turm)

Rebecca Lara Müller

Trained in film acting and musical theatre, she works across cinema, TV, and stage. Her leading roles in Das Leuchten der Nacht and Kein Ausgang earned multiple Best Actress awards at international festivals. Fluent in German, English, French, and Italian, with strong dance and musical skills, she brings versatility and presence to every role.

2016 Familie2020 Unter Uns2021 SOKO Stuttgart

2024 Serial Däter2024 Ever After2025 (Nicht) mehr wir





Pavlo Kruzhnov

Pavlo Kruzhnov first caught attention as Zbyshek in the indie standout Shlyakhetni volotsyuhi—an ensemble that swept Best Costume Design at the 2019 IMDb Awards. He then demonstrated his versatility in the psychological thriller Nelson and the heartfelt family drama Nashi Kotyky . Now, as Vitalik Pavlenko in "A Million Yard Stare, Kruzhnov" cements his reputation for filling complex roles with deep emotional nuance..

2018 Shylyakhetni volotsyuhi 2019 Nelson 2020 Sashi Kotyky



Screenplay Ravi Gautam

Pepino Pushpani Annika Schimetzek

Producers Jennifer Pengel

Holger Leister

Annika Schimetzek

DOP Pepino Pushpani

Editors Ravi Gautam

Pepino Pushpani

Sound Design Surya Karn Gupta

Dialogue Editor Soham Sanyal

Music Viktoria Lelèka

Tabea Zimmermann



Jennifer Pengel

As co-founder of Webfilmland Productions she launched her producing career with *Soch: A Perception*, which screened at prestigious international festivals and garnered multiple accolades, including the Director's Vision Award at the Indian Film Festival Stuttgart. Known for her strategic vision and collaborative leadership, she shapes bold narratives from concept to completion with exceptional precision and care. Her work on *A Million Yard Stare* further exemplifies her commitment to producing distinctive, character-driven stories that engage audiences and resonate on a global scale.

2020 Let's not have sex tonight2024 Soch: A Perception

2025 Un Abrazo2025 A Million Yard Stare

Surya Karn Gupta

Surya Karn Gupta's extensive experience in sound design and audio editing shapes the rich auditory depth of A Million Yard Stare. His work on major Bollywood productions and in renowned studios has enabled him to craft layered, immersive soundscapes for films worldwide. With a keen sense for subtle audio elements, he heightens the emotional impact of key scenes. Having previously collaborated with director Ravi Gautam on Soch: A Perception, their synergy ensured the sound design aligned seamlessly with the film's visual and narrative elements.

2023 Lust Stories 22023 Maidan2023 Zara Hatke Zara Bachke

2023 Dream Girl 22023 Dunki2024 Emergency



Viktoria Lelèka

Viktoria Leléka emerged on Berlin's jazz scene in 2016 with her quartet LELÉKA, blending chamber jazz and Ukrainian melodies to win the Creole Global Music Contest and Burghausen Jazz Prize soon after. Known for fusing folk motifs with modern improvisation, she has composed soundtracks such as There Will Be Humans. In A Million Yard Stare, she contributes an expressionist score and original Ukrainian songs that amplify the film's emotional depth and authenticity.

2020 There will be humans2021 Platstyk

2024 The Runaway2024 Mother



Film Stills









