

A dark, atmospheric scene of a train at night. The train is positioned on the left side of the frame, moving towards the viewer. Its two bright headlights are the primary source of light, creating a strong glow and illuminating the tracks ahead. The rest of the scene is shrouded in deep shadow, with some faint lights visible in the distance. The overall mood is somber and historical.

THE
RESISTANCE
APRIL 1943 (MECHELEN, BELGIUM)

THE STORY

A man in a dark trench coat and hat is walking away from the camera down a narrow, cobblestone street. The street is flanked by brick walls on the left and stone buildings on the right. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting dusk or dawn, with a few street lamps and a window light visible. The overall mood is somber and historical.

Based on the incredible true story of the Belgian resistance group (Comité de Défense des Juifs) that successfully attacked the Twentieth Convoy train holding over 1500 prisoners bound for Auschwitz - freeing over 200 Belgian Jews.

THE CHARACTERS



EVA MAISTRIAU



Early 20's. Warm and bright-eyed, Eva is an optimist whose naivety leads her to downplay the capabilities of the Nazis. Not being Jewish herself, she thinks it won't affect her life, despite being in love with her Jewish boyfriend, Pierre. It is only when she witnesses brutality towards a young Jewish girl firsthand that she finally accepts the realities of the war and is inspired to join the Belgian Resistance her sister, Helene, has long been apart of.

PIERRE TOLKOSKY



Late 20s. Charming and sensitive, he gets wrapped up in the rose-colored world Eva paints for him. Despite being Jewish, he initially believes he is safe from the Nazi's reach in their small town. When this illusion is shattered, he finds his courage and conviction to join the Resistance alongside Eva, Helene, and Gérard.

HELENE MAISTRIAU



Late 20's. Fiery and bold, Helene has been a long-time participant in the Belgian Resistance group - Comité de Défense des Juifs. Although she is not Jewish herself, she is a fierce advocate for undermining the Nazis and helping Jews any way she can. Working at Gérard's pharmacy has opened up the perfect opportunity for her to create false papers and deliver them to Jewish neighbors, hidden in their prescription bottles.

GÉRARD ADLER



Late 60s. Stoic but warm, Gérard is a pillar of the Jewish community, and his resolute kindness is palpable to all who meet him. He uses his unique expertise of chemistry and his position as a pharmacy owner to contribute to the Belgian Resistance. He recruits Helene to join the fight, and welcomes Eva and Pierre when they ultimately follow in her footsteps. The wise leader of their foursome.

SYNOPSIS

In 1943 Mechelen, Belgium, at the height of the Holocaust, *The Resistance* begins in a small, dark room with sisters Eva and Helene, Pierre and Gérard. As they huddle over a map, they plot their greatest act of defiance yet. The stakes are high, and the danger is palpable, but we don't discover what they are planning.

Flashing back to two months prior, Eva and her loving boyfriend Pierre walk the streets of the city in romantic bliss. The atmosphere is shattered when they approach their usual restaurant for lunch, only to read a sign in the window stating "NO JEWS ALLOWED." Eva, who is not Jewish, is still naive to the extent of the Nazi realities that have hit their small town and thinks the owner could not possibly be referring to her Jewish boyfriend Pierre, who he has known since childhood. They start to argue but are quickly interrupted by a grotesque scream. An SS Policeman is repeatedly kicking and beating a teenage Jewish girl; as Pierre tries to intervene, we realize they are too late - the girl is dead. Before the Officer can call for backup, Pierre and Eva flee the scene to avoid arrest. It is in the aftermath of this horrific encounter that Eva finally finds the strength to face the harsh reality of the war and decides she must do something.

Eva rushes back to her family home, which she shares with her older sister Helene, and explains that she wants to join the Comité de Défense des Juifs (The Belgian Resistance). Helene has been a long-time member, but Eva has never understood the need. Despite having reservations about her younger sister's safety, Helene ultimately relents.

SYNOPSIS (continued)

Two weeks later, we pick up at Gérard's pharmacy, where Helene also works. Although he is Jewish, Gérard is still allowed to own and operate his own pharmacy, for now, which is an invaluable asset to the Resistance. Helene has perfected the art of falsifying identity papers that remove the "Jewish" marker, allowing Belgian Jews greater freedom and safety. Helene then hides these papers inside the pill bottles and distributes them to Jewish people, without detection. In the middle of prepping for one of these "special deliveries," they are surprised by Pierre, who has overheard their conversation and witnessed the entire operation. Pierre informs them he, like Eva, is ready to fight and wants to join them. They welcome him to the Resistance.

As Pierre and Gérard continue preparing for the unknown major act of defiance, Gérard unveils a small pistol that Helene has stolen from an SS Officer. With Gérard's chemical expertise, they also build makeshift Molotov cocktails and a red-papered lantern they will use as a signal. It's almost time.

Finally, on the night of April 19, 1943 - just outside Mechelen, Eva, Helene, Pierre, and Gérard hide at the edge of a dark forest, ready to put their plan into action. As they crouch in the darkness, we hear the sounds of a train approaching in the distance. Eva uses a flashlight to send a signal to another group off-screen as the train grows closer. Eva and Pierre share a touching moment, a final kiss in case it is their last goodbye. Then suddenly, out of the shadows, all four lurch towards the train. In the text on the screen that serves as our epilogue, we discover the true story of the Belgian Resistance group who successfully attacked a train full of 1500 Jewish people bound for Auschwitz, guarded by 16 Nazis. The brave actions of just three young Belgians, armed with only a single pistol, allowed 233 Jews to escape.

ARTISTIC STATEMENT

As I searched for a compelling story from the Holocaust, I discovered an incredible true story of the Jewish Resistance in Belgium. When so many films set in WW2 focus on the unthinkable atrocities against the Jewish people, very few showcase the incredibly defiant, rebellious actions of so many brave Europeans who resisted the Nazis not just with their words but with their actions. I was especially compelled by the Comité de Défense des Juifs (Committee for the Defense of Jews), as the group was comprised of people from so many different backgrounds, many of whom were not Jewish, in a united front against senseless hatred and violence. I also have yet to see a film or book from the Holocaust set in Belgium, and I wanted to highlight the extent of not only the Nazi's chokehold over most of Europe at the time but the expansive network of resistance that was equally present in nearly every country they occupied.

As America today is swept by a cruel wave of rising anti-semitism, the world needs not only to be reminded of the horrific atrocities against the Jewish people, both past and present but *also* to recognize their continued, remarkable strength and resilience despite harrowing circumstances.

The Resistance is based on the unbelievable true story of just a handful (three) young Belgian Resistance fighters who attacked a train with over 1500 Jewish prisoners bound for Auschwitz. Armed with only one pistol against 16 Nazi soldiers, these young Belgians successfully freed over 200 Belgian Jews.

This film will not shy away from the very real darkness of the time, but it will also be infused with hope, light, and beautiful moments of human connection. There will be tense moments when our characters risk everything to help others, and there will be fractions of time when the war fades into the background, and the characters are swept up in romantic moments of care for each other.

I wanted to tell a story highlighting the resisters as the heroes and showcasing people from different backgrounds finding a common purpose to defy hatred and authoritarianism. To inspire audiences of the power of our convictions and that any one person can truly make a difference. We are not as helpless as we tend to paint ourselves, and that good is *always* worth fighting for.

Natalie Schwan

T O N E + F E E L

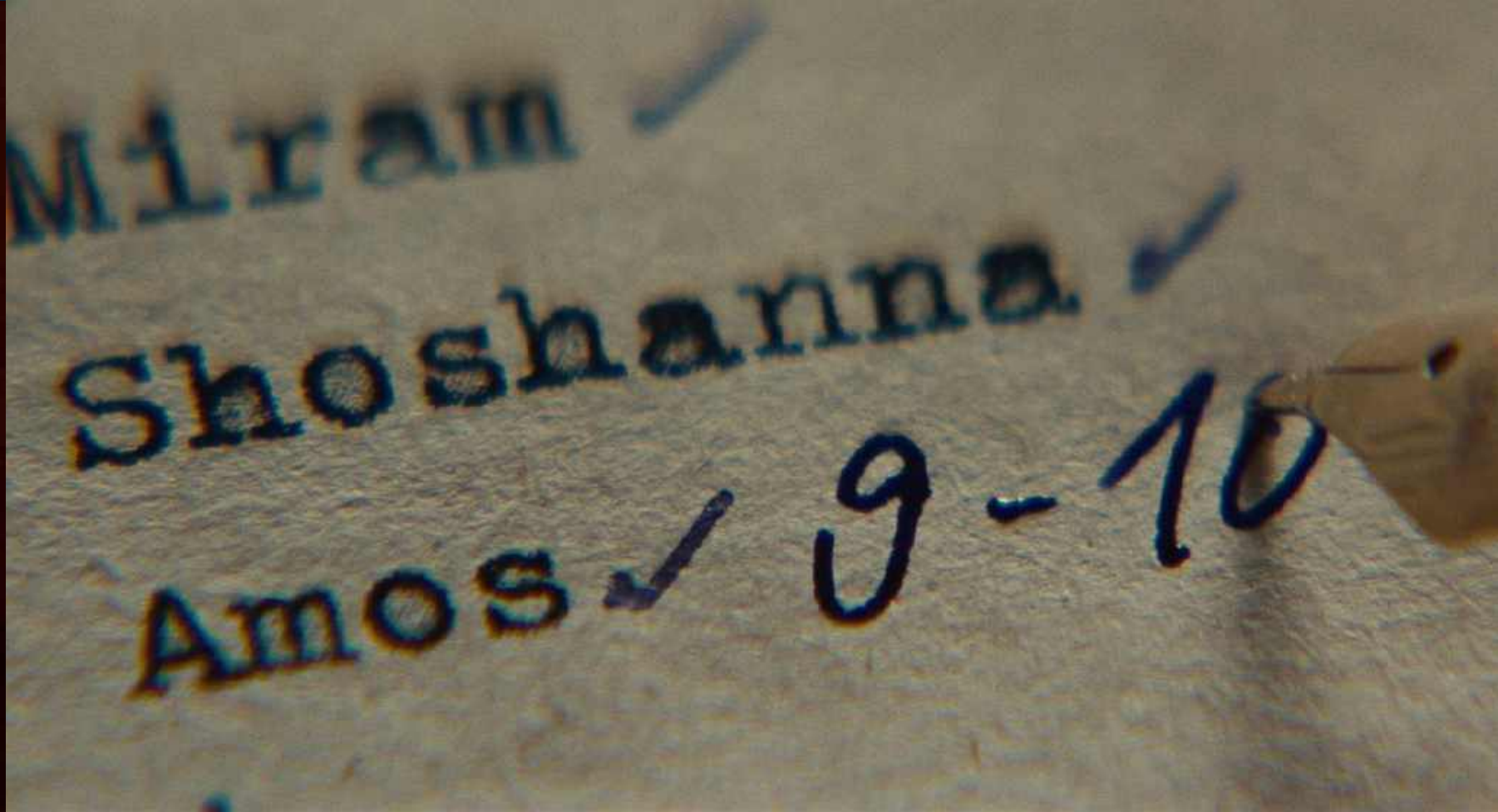
Visually, the film will reflect the ominous undertones of the times with a gritty, dark palette. Interior scenes will feel claustrophobic and stay tight on the characters - the camera mirroring the constant fear and paranoia of impending danger, the palpable anxiety of being caught. These moments of intensity will be fractured by lighter, softer moments of emotional connection between the characters and autonomous actions that reclaim their humanity: slivers of hope that defy the darkness. At its core, this film is about resilience amidst unthinkable circumstances, the fullness of human connection, and the potency of hope.



TO NE + FEEL



TO N E + F E E L



T O N E + F E E L



ACHIEVING AN AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION

The Resistance is slated to go into production in the fall of 2025. On a low budget, authentically portraying the Belgian Resistance in 1943 will require creative thinking and considerable pre-production planning. Our goal is to maximize the resources that we already have and be strategic with all visual elements.

- **Locations:** Our plan is to utilize real locations that can be transformed into period-appropriate settings with minimal set design. While we can replicate 1943 European landscapes in the United States by focusing on alleyways, corner stores, and other contained environments, we're also exploring the option of shooting on location in Belgium. Filming there would offer a more authentic backdrop and enhance the historical and visual accuracy of the film.
- **Costumes & Props:** The use of practical props and costumes can be costly; however, working with our production designer and costume designer well in advance ensures that we have time to develop creative ways to pull this off. Fortunately, our costume designer has access to period-specific attire, and we will collaborate with our production designer on crafting DIY props such as makeshift Molotov cocktails, red-papered lanterns, and pill bottles containing identity papers.
- **Sound Design & Score:** Effective sound design and a compelling score will complement the visual in the film, and many elements will play out through specific sound effects off-screen rather than seeing the action on screen. For example, we only hear the train approaching and never see it on-screen, and the use of sound effects and the score will add the needed realism to the moment that would otherwise be difficult to achieve with a small budget.



T E A M



Natalie Schwan- Director/Writer

Natalie Schwan is an award-winning director and producer, and founder of full-service production companies Velocity Creatives and Velocity Films . She is known for work that celebrates the vastness of the human condition, the journey of the overcomer, and the spirit of adventure. She has received multiple Telly Awards for directing and producing, produced Webby-nominated work, and won 2nd place in the SheDirected Audience Awards Competition for her J.K. Rowling biopic short film “Jo”. She has received press from Variety, and her work has been featured at festivals including LA Shorts, IndyShorts, SOHO International and Chelsea International and has been a semi-finalist at Flicker’s Rhode Island.

In 2015, she launched her award-winning production company, Velocity Creatives, which creates commercial and narrative content that present stunning visual stories that inspire, challenge and excite. She has produced and directed work for brands including SONOS, Colgate and Goldman Sachs. She has recently pivoted to TV/Film development and launched a new branch of her business - Velocity Films - that focused on narrative shorts and episodic + feature films in early 2023.

She is constantly drawn to historical narratives and adventure stories. Natalie’s slate includes a Montana-based Western, a period-era Ellis Island narrative series, a stylized high-action dramatic thriller feature, a Holocaust-era story of the Jewish Resistance, and a female-driven scripted global anthology series. Her heart is in travel and exploring, and you can often find her planning her next international adventure.

T E A M



Jessica Olthof - Producer

Jessica Olthof, a versatile producer based in Los Angeles, began her career as a camera assistant before transitioning to the production space and ultimately producing. In the past five years, she has coordinated over ten feature films, including "Palm Springs", starring Andy Samberg and JK Simmons, and "The Starling", directed by Ted Melfi and featuring Melissa McCarthy, Chris O'Dowd, and Kevin Kline. Her portfolio also includes LA Units for "Next Goal Wins", "The Banker", "Voyagers", "Molly's Game", and "Greenland".

In 2023, Olthof produced the award-winning short film "Nisei", which claimed Best Dramatic Short at Cinequest Film Festival and screened at over 15 festivals including Indy Shorts by Heartland Film, LA Shorts International Film Festival, HollyShorts Film Festival, and Newport Beach Film Festival. "Nisei" was listed in Variety's top 15 Shortlist Predictions for Best Live Action Short Film - 96th Academy Awards®.

She is currently producing her first feature film, "Surrender", starring Andrea Bang from Kim's Convenience, with support from Film Independent and The Gotham Film & Media Institute. A passionate advocate for gender equality in the industry, Jessica is an active member of Women in Film.



Connor Van Bodell - Cinematographer

Of all the disciplines within film, what drew Connor in was the camera. Specifically the psychology behind where you placed it and what that subconsciously imparts on an audience. Now, half a lifetime later he is still driven by the nuances of cinematography and role the camera plays in crafting a story.

Upon graduating college he attended Global Cinematography Institute where his knowledge of the craft skyrocketed. From there he worked his way up through the film industry starting in camera then Key & Dolly Gripping for a slew of talented cinematographers. Before returning to cinematography with years of experience in camera movement & shaping light. Connor refuses to half-ass anything, committing fully to any project thrown his way with a knack for creative solutions to impossible problems. His hard work paid initial dividends gaining dual union membership to the Cinematographers Guild & Motion Picture Grips.

Connor has shot commercials for clients such as RIVIAN, Western Digital, Invisalign & Cisco. He loves the creative thinking, emotional connection & technical prowess needed to successfully market a product through film. Though his true passion for cinematography lies in narrative. He has shot a long list of short form projects as well as a horror feature & is fueled by the art of visual storytelling.

T E A M



Sarah Cogan - Costume Designer

Sarah Cogan is a New York-based designer for film and TV. She is the costume designer for the highly acclaimed 2024 Oscar-shortlisted “Bienvenidos a Los Angeles” and the 2023 Oscar-eligible period drama “18 1/2” starring John Magarro and Willa Fitzgerald. She's also designed the western “Birthright Outlaw” starring Sarah Drew and Lucas Black and the upcoming features “Tapawingo”--a screw-ball comedy starring Jon Heder, Billy Zane, Gina Gershon, and Kim Matula--and “Abroad”-- a Korean/American psychological thriller and winner of the 27th Bucheon Fantastic Film Festival Audience Award. Sarah recently wrapped “Beyond the Rush”, starring Bill Barrett, Mena Suvari, Cathy Moriarty, Eric Roberts, and Frankie Faison. She has also been an assistant costume designer for major shows such as “Blindspot”, “Lyle Lyle Crocodile”, and “Last Week Tonight with John Oliver”. Sarah is a proud member of USA/IATSE Local 829

Along with working as a full-time designer, Sarah runs online workshops on worldbuilding, film design, pitch decks, and budgeting for your film's design. Her mission is to help filmmakers better understand how to utilize costumes, hair, makeup, and production design as storytelling tools. Sarah is also the co-owner of Grandma's Closet Costume Rentals in Brooklyn, which boasts over 2,000 sq ft of costumes from the 1940s-today. You can find Sarah online at sarahcogan.com and on social media @sarahcogandesigns to view her work and access her free educational resources.



Clark Rhee - Composer

Clark is a composer, musician, and music editor based in Los Angeles, California. Clark earned an undergraduate degree in music from Seattle Pacific University in 2012. While an undergraduate student, Clark wrote music for the short film Dreamers, a finalist of the 41st Annual Student Academy Awards held by the Academy of Motion Picture.

Since completion of his undergraduate education, Clark has provided additional music, arrangements and worked as a score coordinator and music editor for film and television. Recent projects include “The Witcher,” “Shadow & Bone,” and “Star Wars: Tales from the Galaxy's Edge.”

C O N T A C T

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