

**STRAND
RELEASING**

presents

MY NAME IS SARA

A FILM BY
Steven Oritt

Starring Zuzanna Surowy

PRESS NOTES

Country of Origin: USA
Format: DCP/2.40/Color
Sound: 5.1 Stereo
Running Time: 111 minutes
Genre: Drama
Not Rated
In English

National Press Contact:

Carly Hildebrant / Marcus Hu
Strand Releasing
Phone: 310.836.7500
carly@strandreleasing.com
marcus@strandreleasing.com

SYNOPSIS

MY NAME IS SARA tells the true life story of Sara Goralnik, a 13-year-old Polish Jew whose entire family was killed by Nazis in September 1942. After a grueling escape to the Ukrainian countryside, Sara steals her Christian best friend's identity and finds refuge in a small village, where she is taken in by a farmer and his young wife. She soon discovers the dark secrets of her employers' marriage, compounding her own greatest secret that she must strive to protect, her true identity.

ABOUT SARA GORALNIK – SUBJECT OF THE FILM

In June of 1941, Sara Goralnik was just 11 years old when the German Army invaded her hometown of Korets, in present-day Ukraine. Prior to the war, Korets was part of an independent Poland that encompassed the eastern territory of Ukraine, home to a thriving Jewish community whose history in the region dates back over 1000 years. There, Jews forged a burgeoning merchant-class that in some of the provinces such as Volyn, where Korets sits, comprised as much as two-thirds of the local population.

At the time, eastern Poland was a true melting pot where Jews, Polish Catholics and Ukrainian Eastern Orthodox Christians cohabitated in relative peace for centuries. Jews were the commercial backbone of the area and flourished as tradesmen; the local Ukrainian farmers however, did not fare as well. Poorly educated, oppressed by the Polish nobility and starved by the Soviets during the great famine of the 1930's left many Ukrainians vulnerable and desperate. This complex social context foregrounds this moving and inspirational story of a young girl's life journey.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT – STEVEN ORITT

MY NAME IS SARA is my feature film debut – a deeply personal story that was first shared with me in 2014 by the woman who survived it. Her married name was Sara Shapiro and for over fifty years, she hid this incredible true story from her own family, choosing to only reveal the secrets of her ordeal much later in life.

Sara Shapiro passed away recently, but not before she was able to convey in detail, the horrors of what she endured to survive. Her memories were the basis for my film and provided a structure that the screenwriter and I were able to weave into our narrative. Although some of the minor characters in our film were invented, most of the principals were not, and most of the actions that transpire are rooted in true events.

While the film was both developed and financed in the US with an American writer/director, it was cast, shot, edited and posted entirely in Poland. Aside from myself, the entire crew was comprised of top artists from the Polish film industry. Our talented cast includes Poles, Germans, Russians and Ukrainians. The role of a 13-year-old Sara was the most difficult to cast. Our initial attempts to find a professional actress were unsuccessful, so we held open calls in Poland, seeking over 650 girls. Among them, we discovered a talented young woman who despite barely speaking English gave an exceptional performance for a first time actress.

MY NAME IS SARA has been the most rewarding project of my career and I am tremendously proud of what the team and I were able to achieve. I feel extremely grateful to be able to share Sara's story with the world and hope that in doing so, it might shed some light on the darkness of her past.

DIRECTOR BIO – STEVEN ORITT

Steven's directing background began in the music video industry where he worked with such acclaimed recording artists as Foo Fighters, Muse, One Republic, Pete Dinklage and Paulina Rubio.

From there, he moved into the documentary world with his feature-length debut “American Native,” which tells the story of a reclusive tribe of Native Americans living 30 minutes from New York City in the hills of New Jersey. The film appeared at 13 festivals around the world and earned best documentary/director awards at 4 of them. Steven’s follow-up documentary, “Accidental Climber,” made its world premiere at the 2018 Napa Valley Film Festival and is currently on the festival circuit. The film looks at one man’s attempt to become the oldest American to climb Mt. Everest – what ensued however was the worst disaster in mountaineering history, leaving 16 climbers dead in a tragic avalanche.

Steven launched his production company, James Lucy Productions, in 2014. His first producing project as the documentary short “Kid Yamaka,” an intimate profile of troubled boxer Zachary Wohlman and his path to redemption through boxing, Judaism and sobriety. The film was selected to the Academy Award qualifying Flickers Rhode Island International Film Festival, as well as DOC NYC – and was later acquired by Vice’s Fightland Channel. James Lucy is currently developing an episodic series for AMC Networks about a notorious crime family from El Paso, Texas whose quest for the American Dream fueled a 1970’s drug empire; as well as finalizing Steven’s feature debut, MY NAME IS SARA.

MAIN CAST

Sara	Zuzanna Surowy
Pavlo	Eryk Lubos
Nadya	Michalina Olszanska
Stepan	Marcin Sokolski
Danylo	Artur Sokolski
Father Oleska	Wieslaw Komasa
Ivan	Pawel Krolikowski
Grisha	Piotr Nerlewski
Moishe	Konrad Cichon
Boris	Stanislav Cywka
Galya Ivanenko	Iwona Bielska
Marina	Izabela Dabrowska
Rachel	Katarzyna Pachelska
The Bear	Sergey Ivanyuk
Private	Radoslaw Kaim
Tsivia	Aleksandra Pisula
Pavlo’s mother	Magdalena Celowna-Janikowska
Pavlo’s father	Ryszard Ronczewski
Fedir Ivanenko	Lech Dyblik
Mykola Ivanenko	Mikolaj Kubacki
Avram	Ksawery Szlenkier
Colonel	Klaudiusz Kaufmann
SS Officer	Maciej Mikolajczyk
Mother of a 15-year-old boy	Paulina Puslednik
Captain	Bartosz Porczyk

MAIN CREW

Director	Steven Oritt
Writer	David Himmelstein
Producers	Steven Oritt Justyna Pawlak
Executive Producers	Andy Intrater Mickey Shapiro
Co-Producers	David Himmelstein Stephen Smith June Beallor
Cinematographer	Marian Prokop
Production Designer	Marek Zawierucha
Editor	Agnieszka Glinska
Composer	Lukasz Targosz
Costume Designer	Emilia Czartoryska
Casting Director	Nadia Lebik

Distributed by STRAND RELEASING

For more information, please contact Carly Hildebrant at carly@strandreleasing.com or Marcus Hu at marcus@strandreleasing.com.

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