**What was the original motivation for making *Arrhythmia*?**

I didn’t originally plan to make the film the way it turned out to be. The story took shape as we were working on the screenplay. Initially, the film was supposed to be a comedy, but it took a turn towards drama when the characters ‘found’ their profession.

**The film isn’t limited to a couple story; it deals with a larger issue: the evolution of the medical system in Russia, why did you choose this background?**

That wasn’t planned either. When we came up with the idea that our characters will be doctors, Natalia Meschaninova and I began to research this subject in detail. We talked with paramedics, doctors and department heads, and recorded our conversations on video.

Gradually, we learned more information and facts, which we incorporated into dramatic composition of the film.

**Did you research in real hospitals when writing the script? What were the most interesting and surprising things you discovered in this process?**

Yes, we had seven or eight consultants - doctors and paramedics from different parts of Russia who work in emergency departments. In each case they were dealing with slightly different problems, but overall the healthcare reform affected everyone quite deeply, so at some point we focused on this controversial subject. I wouldn’t apply the words “interesting and surprising” to the work of medical professionals, because it’s an endless stream of medical cases and routine procedures. While on the outside it might look striking, shocking and gruesome, on the inside people feel like regular employees.

**Arrhythmia shows a lot of Russia through the different patients, often with a light tone. You always played with the codes of comedy. Is comedy a good way of showing a reality?**

I believe comedy is one of the best ways to portray reality, because when a person smiles and tells jokes, that’s when he or she is most relaxed. When we talk about someone with a good deal of irony or sarcasm, we see that person as a whole. If we use overly serious and moralizing type of rhetoric, the character becomes two-dimensional and only serves a functional purpose in the hands of the author.

**Where was the film shot and why was this particular location chosen?**

The film was shot in the city of Yaroslavl. It’s a medium-sized Russian city, and an ideal location for us because it’s visually rather diverse. It has old and new districts, a pedestrian walkway running along the river, and all the other settings described in our screenplay.

**How was the character of Oleg born?**

Natalia Meschaninova and I had the idea of creating a character who is extremely weak and immature in his personal life, at the level of a 12-year-old. At the same time, in his professional life we wanted Oleg to be very ‘adult’, confident and precise, as if he’s spent more years in the profession than he really has. We wanted to make him full of contradictions.

**Both the main actors deliver a strong performance. Why did you cast them in the first place?**

Probably that’s why - because they deliver a strong performance. In the case of Alexander, this is the fifth time I’ve worked with him. As for Irina Gorbacheva, this is the first time we’ve worked together. The principle employed in selecting them for the roles was that I was looking for actors who, in terms of their personality and emotionally, were similar to the characters in the film. I didn’t want the actors to act, I wanted them to tell us about themselves, so that, in a way, it would be a documentary film about these two actors.

**What were you going for with the character of the new boss of Oleg that implements the new strict rules?**

The significance of this character boils down to him being a prisoner of circumstance, of the job that he has taken on. He is neither good nor bad. He’s an effective manager who has been put in these circumstances by the healthcare reform.

**What about the music?**

When we wrote the script, Natalia Meschaninova suggested the two songs that are featured in the film, but we had no idea that the song that plays at the house party would become the main theme. That became clear after we had shot the scene. When I looked at it, I was absolutely convinced that we had to put this song at the finale as well.