

Yevgenia Berkovich's Statement in Verse to the Court is Now an Illustrated Music Video

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Press service of the Zamoskvoretsky Court of Moscow

Theater director Yevgeniya (Zhenya) Berkovich and playwright Svetlana Petriychuk were back in court right after the New Year's holidays to determine if they would be released from pre-trial detention. The two women have been held since May 2023 on charges that the play "Finist, the Brave Falcon," written by Petriychuk and directed by Berkovich, contained elements justifying terrorism. The play is about Russian women who fall in love online with Islamic terrorists.

This time, when Berkovich had her chance to make a statement to the court, she recited her statement in verse.

It made no difference; the two women had their detention extended for another three months.

In another part of the world Roma Liberov, a documentary filmmaker and producer, was

about to take a much-needed short vacation. When he heard Berkovich's statement to the court in verse, he told The Moscow Times that he "couldn't stay on the sidelines. I had to do something right away."

He abandoned his plans and gathered together a creative team from the worlds of music, theater and journalism. Actress Chulpan Khamatova, musicians Naum Blik, Vladi, Ligoza, Krec, and journalist Katerina Gordeeva created a video based on courtroom sketches and Berkovich's verse.

"This isn't the first time in the history of Russia and the Soviet Union that there is a trial of creative people over something they created," Liberov said. "There was the trial of [writers Yuly] Daniel and Andrei Sinyavsky, and the poet Joseph Brodsky, and later Andrei Sakharov, too. Courtroom trials document eras in Russia."

"If there had not been Frida Vigdorova, we wouldn't have had the transcript of Brodsky's trial," he continued. "It's very important to get it all down, so it's more than simply an address to a judge in verse...and to be sure it will last."

Since the video was released on January 22 more than 80,000 people have watched it. Liberov was pleased that the work had such resonance.

"In a dictatorship you never know what might work," he said.

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