

## **GITEL – released (short theatrical release in Lithuania) September 2016.**

5th September 1969, and Gitel Bargman is about to attend a party to celebrate her 33rd birthday - although for her it is hardly cause for celebration. She is racked with guilt for simply being alive. Attractive, intelligent and witty, Gitel is a successful violinist who lives in a Kuybyshev (USSR) apartment. To the outsider, she has everything. But Gitel hides a secret. She's a haunted woman: haunted not only by painful memories of the past, but also by the ghosts of her two sisters who died when she, by a mere quirk of fate, survived. And because she lives in the past, Gitel cannot embrace her future. To love, and to be loved in return, remains an impossible dream. October 13th, 1941, the Ninth Fort, Kovno, Lithuania. A horrified young Gitel watches helplessly as her parents and both sisters are murdered in the extermination camp at Kovno, Lithuania. She is standing alone, frozen with terror. Since that day Gitel has received 'visitations' from her two dead sisters, Zelde and Chayke. She discusses them with her psychiatrist who is disinterested and disbelieving, even when she tells him she can actually 'almost touch them.' The same thought returns over and over to Gitel: 'How can I live, when they died?' At a birthday party, thrown for her by her surviving brother Chaim, she meets Lev Rosenzweig. Lev also has a disturbing past - his wife's suicide and a son who refuses to forgive his father for his mother's death. Reluctantly and painfully, Lev and Gitel try to find love in each other. Lev, urged on by Chaim, persuades her to return to Lithuania for the first time since the Holocaust. In Kovno, Gitel visits the site of the murder. She breaks down. She lies on the ground. It rains. Lev lies down beside her, and Gitel allows him to console her. Back in the Kovno hotel the visitations continue. Gitel begins to question her sanity and wonders whether she is inventing these dead siblings, or whether they are in some sense 'real'? And she wonders whether she can learn to live without them. Back in Kuybyshev she realizes she's in love. In her apartment Gitel and Lev tenderly make love. As a gesture of her love, she decides to track down Lev's estranged son David and tries to persuade him to see his father. David refuses. Suddenly tragedy strikes when Lev suffers a heart attack. As Gitel nurses him back to life she finds she has less time for her dead visitors. Gitel and Lev marry. At the reception, Lev's estranged son and a granddaughter Lev didn't even know existed arrive - they tearfully embrace. At the end of the reception, and unbeknown to Lev, they are joined by Gitel's deceased siblings. She understands that this will be their last visit.