

Czech Republic sends *Il Boemo* to Oscars

Czech Film and Television Academy (CFTA) selected *Il Boemo* as this year's Oscar candidate. Period drama, written and directed by Petr Václav, will represent the Czech Republic as the official submission for the 95th Academy Awards in the category Best International Feature Film. Czech Film Fund supported *Il Boemo*, which will celebrate world premiere in San Sebastian's main competition this month, for both development and production with EUR 948,000.

Set in the second half of the 18th century, *Il Boemo* tells an extraordinary story of Josef Mysliveček, son of a Prague's miller, who leaves for Italy to fulfil his dream and establish himself as a composer in the very centre of European opera. Thanks to his talent but also to his charisma and luck, in a few years he manages to break through where many others have failed before him. From an unknown musician "from the north", he becomes one of the biggest stars of the musical firmament at the time. Recognition and fame bring him satisfaction, give him access to the highest circles of society, and provide him with constant favour of women, including the most famous opera divas. Yet, despite his success, he is unable to provide for himself materially on a permanent basis.

Petr Václav spent more than 10 years making his dream film, which will be introduced in world premiere at San Sebastian IFF in the main competition. As a big-budget, director-driven film, *Il Boemo* is a rare project by Czech standards and has been a long time coming for Václav and his collaborators. The FAMU graduate, who now resides in France, debuted in 1996 with his film about a Roma boy, *Marian*, which won him the Silver Leopard at Locarno. Václav is also known for his films *Parallel Worlds* (2001) and *The Way Out* (2014), which premiered in San Sebastian (New Directors competition) and the ACID section in Cannes respectively. *The Way Out*, which focused on a young Roma woman trying to escape her poor living conditions, won seven Czech Lions in 2014, including Best Film, and also four Czech Film Critics' Awards. Lately, director released drama *We Are Never Alone* (2016, presented in Forum at Berlinale and at Toronto IFF), *The Jumper* (2017) and also *Confession of the Vanished*, the 2015 documentary about a performance of Josef Mysliveček's opera *Olimpiade* and the composer himself, which served as prep work for his feature-length narrative film.

Il Boemo is Czech-Italian-Slovak co-operation with Jan Macola of Mimesis Film being the main producer. Co-producers include Italian Dugong Films (producer Marco Alessi), Slovak sentimentalfilm (Marek Urban) and Czech co-producers Czech Television, Magiclab, Libor Winkler, Daniel Bergmann and Jan Menclík. *Il Boemo* was supported by the Czech Film Fund for both development and production with total EUR 948 000 and also in the Production Incentives programme. The film was also backed by Creative Europe – MEDIA, Prague Film Fund, Pilsen Region, South Moravian Film Fund, Slovak Audiovisual Fund, Film Foundation, Arte, MIBAC (Ministero della cultura), Liguria Film Fund, Veneto Film Fund and Sicilia Film Fund.

The latest Czech representative at Oscars was *Zatopek* by David Ondříček. So far only two Czechoslovak and one Czech film have managed to get the award for the Best International Feature Film: *The Shop on Main Street* by Ján Kádár and Elmar Klos (in 1966), *Closely Watched Trains* by Jiří Menzel (in 1968) and *Kolya* by Jan Svěrák (1997). Six more films received the nomination: *The Loves of a Blonde* (in 1967) and *The Firemen's Ball* (in 1969) by Miloš Forman, *My Sweet Little Village* by Jiří Menzel (in 1987), *The Elementary School* by Jan Svěrák (in 1992), *Divided We Fall* by Jan Hřebejk (in 2001) and *Želary* by Ondřej Trojan (in 2004).

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