

CZECH FILM

Fall 2017

■ czech
■ film
■ center

Czech Film Center

The Czech Film Center (CFC) was established in 2002 to represent, market and promote Czech cinema and film industry and to increase the awareness of Czech film worldwide. As a national partner of international film festivals and co-production platforms, CFC takes active part in selection and presentation of Czech films and projects abroad. Linking Czech cinema with international film industry, Czech Film Center works with a worldwide network of international partners to profile the innovation, diversity and creativity of Czech films, and looks for opportunities for creative exchange between Czech filmmakers and their international counterparts. CFC provides tailor-made consulting, initiates and co-organizes numerous pitching forums and workshops, and prepares specialized publications. As of February 2017, the Czech Film Center operates as a division of the Czech Film Fund.



Markéta Šantrochová
Head of Czech Film Center
e-mail: marketa@filmcenter.cz
tel.: +420 724 329 948



Barbora Ligasová
Festival Relations-Feature Films
e-mail: barbora@filmcenter.cz
tel.: +420 778 487 863



Martin Černý
Festival Relations-
Documentary & Short Films
e-mail: martin@filmcenter.cz
tel.: +420 778 487 864



Hedvika Petrželková
Editor & External
Communication
e-mail: hedvika@filmcenter.cz
tel.: +420 770 127 726

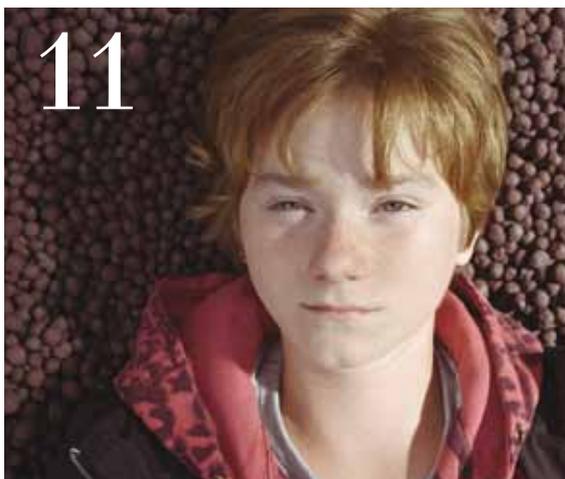
Miloš Forman /

Restored masterpiece of Czechoslovak New Wave, *Black Peter*, premieres at Venice IFF.



Věra Chytilová /

A huge retrospective of Czech film's first lady will be screened at DocLisboa.



Nina /

Slovak-Czech coproduction feature by Juraj Lehotský will be screened at Toronto IFF.



LAIKA /

A feature-length stereoscopic puppet film about the first dog in space.



Pitch & Feedback at KVIFF /

Six promising Czech and Slovak projects were presented to international experts.

2 CZECH FILM NOW

10 TORONTO IFF / SHOT IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

15 FOCUS / DOCUMENTARY

20 INTRODUCTION / IMPRISONED

22 INTERVIEW / DAVID MRNKA

29 FILM COMMISSION / REGIONAL FILM OFFICES

32 IN PRODUCTION / TOMAN

38 FILMS TO COME

Dear colleagues,
this fall, one of the most famous Czech films of all time returns to cinemas. The restored version of *Black Peter*, by Miloš Forman, probably also the most famous Czech director, will celebrate its premiere in Venice Classics.

This black-and-white portrait of a young man reflects the generation of the '60s in Central Europe, but from a broad perspective that makes it still relevant today – especially because of its authentic, often-satirical depiction of the young Peter's trials and tribulations: his clash with authorities, the generational conflict, his first love.

In recent years, history and the issues of the past seem to be attractive subjects for Czech filmmakers, who are now bringing controversial topics to the screen that often present an unflattering image of the Czech nation, portraying figures glorious and shameful alike in a way Czech cinema hasn't seen in a long time.

In this issue, we present portraits of two historical personalities who lived at approximately the same time, but occupy opposite ends of the political spectrum.

Milada Horáková, portrayed by David Mrnka, was one of the most remarkable figures ever to engage in the Czech public sphere. A strong woman and uncompromising politician, she sacrificed her life for her principles, and was executed by the Communist regime on trumped-up charges following a show trial in 1950.

On the other side of the spectrum stands Zdeněk Toman, a ruthless Communist Party official who as head of the Foreign Intelligence Service shaped political developments after World War II and helped the Communists seize power, which among other things resulted in the trial and execution of Horáková and many others.

Enjoy the following pages, wherever you are!

Markéta Šantrochová



Little Crusader wins Grand Prix at Karlovy Vary

This year, for the first time in 15 years, a Czech film won the main competition at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. The five-member main jury awarded the Grand Prix to *Little Crusader*, Václav Kadrnka's meditative drama on fatherhood, starring Karel Roden. The film's director and producer received a Crystal Globe trophy and 25,000 dollars.

Slovak filmmaker Peter Bebjak took the award as Best Director for his film *The Line*, the Special Jury Prize went to *Men Don't Cry*, Bosnian director Alen Drljević's drama about the war in Yugoslavia, and Czech director Václav Vorlíček won the Festival President's Award for Contribution to Czech Cinematography.

Censor, directed and produced by Peter Kerekes and written by Ivan Ostrochovský and Peter Kerekes, was named winner of the Works in Progress Award. /

Three Czech projects tagged for support by Eurimages

The Council of Europe's Eurimages Fund chose 27 projects to support at its June meeting, including three Czech films: *Is This What You Were Born For?* (Romania/Czech Republic/France/Bulgaria), directed by Radu Jude, coproduced by Jiří Konečný/endorfilm; *The Magic Quill* (Czech Republic/Slovakia), directed by Marek Najbrt, produced by Ondřej Beránek and Martin Hůlovec/Punk Film; and *Cook, Fuck, Kill* (Czech Republic/Slovakia), directed by Mira Fornay, produced by Viktor Schwarcz/Cineart TV Prague. /



Czech Film



When the War Comes

© Pink Productions

Cook, Fuck, Kill and When the War Comes to present at Venice Gap-Financing Market

Two Czech projects have been selected for the Venice International Film Festival's Gap-Financing Market, August 31–September 5: *Cook, Fuck, Kill*, a feature directed by Mira Fornay, produced by Cineart TV Prague, and *When the War Comes*, a documentary directed by Jan Gebert, produced by Radovan Šíbrt (Pink Productions). *Cook, Fuck, Kill* portrays a day in the life of 45-year-old Jaroslav K., a handsome, seemingly good-natured son, father, and husband, who in fact is pathologically jealous of his wife, Blanka, with his violence leading to a family tragedy. Director Fornay's debut, *Foxes*, premiered at the 2009 Venice International Film Critics' Week, and her second feature, *My Dog Killer*, won the Hivos Tiger Award at the 2013 International Film Festival Rotterdam. Previously, *Cook, Fuck, Kill* presented at Czech Film Springboard (Finále Plzeň, 2017) and Pitch and Feedback (KVIFF, 2014), both organized by the Czech Film Center.

Gebert's documentary *When the War Comes* introduces viewers to a Slovak paramilitary group recruiting hundreds of teenage members with the goal of creating a model society to prepare for the final clash of civilizations. The film centers on Peter, who lives a seemingly happy life with his girlfriend, though his real commitment lies with the nationalist militia. /

Living Large and Ghost School at Warsaw Kids Film Forum

Kristina Dufková's animated project *Living Large* and Jan Bártek's upcoming feature *Ghost School* have been selected for this year's Warsaw Kids Film Forum, held as part of the Kids Film Festival, September 23–October 1. The puppet project *Living Large*, by accomplished animator Dufková (*Fimfarum: The Third Time Lucky*), is based on the book *La Vie en gros* by French author Mikaël Ollivier, with a screenplay by Petr Jarchovský (a regular collaborator with Jan Hřebejk) and produced by Veronika Sabová of Barletta. The main character is 12-year-old Ben, who never cared he was overweight until one summer he meets Klara. Though he loses weight, Klara rejects him and he sinks into depression, so his mother brings him to a therapist, who helps Ben realize he needs to get back to life and make his dreams come true. The second selected project is *Ghost School*, a feature by young director Jan Bártek, produced by Pavel Berčík of Evolution Films. Bártek's TV series *Kosmo* (2016) was nominated for a Czech Lion award as Best TV Series. Both projects received support from the Czech Film Fund. /



Living Large

© Kristina Dufková

Czech docs in Riga

Two upcoming documentaries — *My Unknown Soldier*, by Anna Kryvenko, and *Satanic Girls: Women on the Move*, by Bohdan Bláhovec — have been selected among 25 projects for the Baltic Sea Forum for Documentaries, September 2–10 in Riga, Latvia.

Nearly 50 years after the "friendly" invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact forces in 1968, *My Unknown Soldier* (Czech Republic, Latvia, Slovakia) attempts to cast a new light on the occupying soldiers, showing that they were often as helpless as the citizens of the country they invaded, and the sad consequences for some of them. The film's producers are Michal Kráčmer (Analog Vision), Sergei Serpuhov (Baltic Pine Films), and Wanda Adamik Hrycova (Wandal Production).

Satanic Girls: Women on the Move (Czech Republic) is directed by Bohdan Bláhovec and produced by Anna Herza Tydlitátová. The film, touching on aging, relationships, and selective memory, follows a group of retired pop divas as they remember their wild rock 'n' roll past. In the 1960s, Irena Hurdová and her sister formed a band that started out as a Dixieland orchestra. During a tour of Bulgaria, they heard about the political clampdown in Czechoslovakia and decided not to go home, instead performing in Europe under the name Satanic Girls. Then their manager sent them to Argentina with the aim of turning the band into South American stars. Bláhovec's feature debut, *Show!*, won the Czech Critics Award for Best Documentary in 2013 and the Audience Award at Jihlava IDFF 2013. /

Now



Satanic Girls: Women on the Move



Miloš Forman's Masterpiece Goes to Venice

© NFA

by Irena Kovarova

New restoration of Miloš Forman's debut feature, *Black Peter*, premieres at Venice International Film Festival.

There is only one world-renowned filmmaker whose illustrious career connects the Czech Republic with the United States in sharing his fame, awards, and artistic excellence over the director's long life span. Turning 85 this year, Miloš Forman is celebrated in both his homes with equal reverence.

It's impossible to say which is more significant: his early works — black comedies in cinema verité style, stemming from his study and love of neorealism, American slapstick and early documentaries — or the masterful Hollywood films? They all deserve praise, and this fall the celebrations culminate with the premiere of Forman's debut feature, *Black Peter*, at the Venice International Film Festival.

Even before 33 Oscar nominations and 13 wins for his films (including the "big five" record win for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, equaled only by two other filmmakers), as well as multiple Golden Globe, Cannes, Ber-

"Miloš Forman is a favorite of mine for his early Czech works. Watching these films today, you can recognize how his depiction of each person, each family, each segment or group, is still a relevant reflection of the system and the entire society, then and now, and here or there. As they say, 'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.' That is something that Miloš delivers to us with a masterful hand."

Florence Almozini, associate director of programming, Film Society of Lincoln Center, New York

linale, BAFTA, Cesar, Donatello and Czech Lion awards, Forman was synonymous with the famed Czechoslovak New Wave, and the year of his film debut, 1963, is also considered the beginning of this informal movement.



Forman came to directing after a long gestation period that started with studies of screenwriting and dramaturgy at Prague's film academy FAMU in the late '50s, and assisting Alfréd Radok on several of his films for the screen and the Laterna Magica theater. Only at age 31 did he bring together a team and start shooting films with his own camera. As he says in his memoir: "When I look back at my first films, I have the impression that I was attempting to achieve one thing: to closely observe. Only later did I realize that I was subconsciously reacting to the highly stylized, dramatic and spectacular style of Alfréd Radok." His mentor's film language brought the viewer "on a trip to the Moon" that necessitated a lot of baggage. "After these escapades, I wanted to take a walk around the block and see what life actually looks like at home."

Authenticity became Forman's trademark. For a generation long denied the freedom of artistic expression, telling the truth of lived reality was not at all banal. Throughout his career, it's evident that Forman is first and foremost an excellent storyteller who is able to construct a film around the simplest of stories and gags. His first feature, *Black Peter*, is a prime example. As the distribution posters announced, it is a "black comedy not only about young people." Generational conflict was

"Rediscovering Milos Forman witty, tender and bittersweet comedy allow us to reconsider a masterpiece which is at the same time a pillar of a fascinating idea of cinema and a document of that time and of another kind of society. Like Antonioni and Olmi in Italy he experienced a new way for enhancing the great legacy of neorealism."

Stefano Francia di Celle, Venice Classics co-curator

new to the film medium in Czechoslovakia, and Forman made wise use of it in all his Czechoslovak films. Even more unusual though was casting nonactors.

The story of *Black Peter* is based on a book by sculptor Jaroslav Papoušek, who along with Ivan Passer became a core member of Forman's creative team. The main character of Peter, the son of an imposing father and an apprentice in a grocery store, reminded Forman of his childhood spent in his uncle's shop. Forman found Papoušek's dialogues very convincing and worth bringing to the screen. As Josef Škvorecký said in *All the Bright Young Men and Women: A Personal History of the Czech Cinema*, the book "was as Miloš would have written it, if he had been a writer." He continued: "The story contradicted everything demanded of films about the young by socialist-realistic aesthetics." In Forman's treatment, the collection of glimpses of mundane situations in a teenager's life becomes true satire.

Decades later, the immensely popular coming-of-age story still entertains, and its dialogues remain a part of the Czech vernacular, repeated over and over by each new generation. Despite the fact that some characters are prime examples of the ideal of a socialist working class, some Communist Party critics condemned *Black Peter* as decadent, pessimistic, and reactionary. But overall, the official reception was positive, and soon the film was invited to compete at the Locarno International Film Festival.



VENICE IFF

RESTORED BLACK PETER



“I don’t know any better way to get immersed in the rich heritage of Czech cinema from the ’60s than through Black Peter. Most people think of Loves of a Blonde or The Firemen’s Ball when they recall the early Miloš Forman films, but Black Peter has all the humor and pathos of those two, and even more of the quirky, tender, and endearing details that make this cinema so potent. This new restoration is the way to see it.”

Margaret Parsons, film curator, National Gallery of Art

Beginning of an International Journey

With his 1964 win of Locarno’s main competition prize, the Golden Sail, for *Black Peter*, Forman opened the floodgates for Czechoslovak cinema, deluged with awards throughout the 1960s. In that year alone, six awards were bestowed on Forman and other Czechs in Locarno. True, Jiří Trnka and other animators and directors, such as Jiří Krejčík, had frequently been honored in the previous decade, but never before or since have festival prizes come in such enthusiastic bursts. A true film wave indeed.

Black Peter also began Forman’s international journey. The warm reception he received at the festivals in Locarno and Venice allowed him to travel to the West on his own, rather than as an assistant to another filmmaker. The Locarno win secured him an invitation to the New York Film Festival, fulfilling his dream of coming to America. New York City was love at first sight — though at that time there was no way for him to know the city would end up being his home for decades to come.

As his feature debut, *Black Peter* was Forman’s promise to the film world on which he made good with the masterful *Loves of a Blonde* in 1967. His sophomore feature brought the director his first Oscar nomination in the best foreign film category; it was widely distributed



ON RESTORATION:

The National Film Archive’s restoration of *Black Peter* marks the first restoration project of this magnitude for Barrandov Studio in Prague. Tereza Frodlová, the NFA’s digital restoration specialist, researched the rich supply of materials in the archive’s holdings, working from a well-preserved negative as well as a number of archived copies. Together with a team that included cinematographer Jan Malíř and sound designer Pavel Rejholec, she supervised the laboratory’s work, consulting with Miloš Forman and Ivan Passer throughout the process.

As is often the case, the research surfaced a scene in the film’s opening sequence found only in one of the archived film prints — most likely cut by the filmmakers themselves to preserve the film’s rhythm. It will be included as a bonus feature on the upcoming DVD release.

around the western world with extensive theatrical runs in Paris (27 weeks), New York (25 weeks), and even Los Angeles (17 weeks). After that, he was showered with screenplays from Britain, France, and, most important, Hollywood. It also attracted foreign producers to the project of Forman’s final Czechoslovak film, *Firemen’s Ball*, which fully confirmed his place in the sun.

“There’s an incredible vibrancy in the Czech Republic, especially when relishing the work of artists like Miloš Forman, and, as in Black Peter, looking back to their darker days. Forman’s resistance parallels the history of his country under oppression. He struggled to make work against formidable odds, emigrating just before the summer 1968 invasion of his country by the Soviets. And you see that resistance carrying through into his American films—the heroic, almost operatic characters, the rebelliousness and joy and search for this freedom. That’s the beauty of Forman’s work.”

Sheryl Mousley, senior curator, Moving Image, Walker Art Center



Chytilová:

Czech Film's First Lady and Wild Child

by Hedvika Petrželková

Director Věra Chytilová, one of Czech cinematography's best-known figures, passed away three years ago, leaving behind a great void. The director's work, of which the experimental farce *Daisies* is particularly celebrated abroad, will be commemorated in October with an extensive retrospective at the **DocLisboa** festival, where some three dozen of her shorts, documentaries, and feature films will be screened.

"For me personally, Chytilová is above all a mysterious director whose work remains to be fully deciphered or even seen: an elusive and indefinable auteur. Her enduring legacy, comprising almost 20 features, follows an ever-changing stylistic trajectory," says Boris Nelepo, film critic and programmer of the Chytilová retrospective at DocLisboa.

In recent years the festival has featured the work of such illustrious and groundbreaking directors as Peter Watkins, Frederick Wiseman, Želimir Žilnik, Johan Van Der Keuken, Chantal Akerman, Harun Farocki, Jean Rouch, Jørgen Leth, Marcel Ophüls, Joris Ivens, and Jonas Mekas.

Chytilová, dubbed the "first lady of Czech film," was in many ways a radical filmmaker. Her primary ambition, to always seek the truth both in art and society, was no easy task under Communist rule. She demanded that art be authentic and tried to get to the heart of things,

eschewing the superficial, and lived her life accordingly. Known for her intransigent and stubborn character, much of what she accomplished was literally wrung from the authorities. Even under a totalitarian regime, she was legendary for her fierce rows with script editors and film studio heads, managing on numerous occasions to fight and win permissions that others could not. She was unafraid, because she was incapable of fear.

"Whenever I had problems getting something made under the regime, I would always tell myself to just go along with it and I'll think what I want. But when it came down to it, I would always get in an argument anyway. The rebel inside me wouldn't allow me to go along with something I didn't agree with," she said in one interview some time ago.

Chytilová was uncompromising, and also pioneering. She instilled her own ideas of morality and all the ways it could fail in filmmaking, while at the same time leav-

PROFILE

VĚRA CHYTILOVÁ



Daisies

ing a distinct mark and looking for new means of cinematic expression. Initially, her style was based on cinéma vérité, which influenced her first short films, *Ceiling* and *A Bagful of Fleas* (presented together as *A Bagful of Fleas by the Ceiling*, 1962), and the feature film *Something Different* (1963), which combined documentary and fiction film. Chytilová was a natural part of the Czechoslovak New Wave, alongside Miloš Forman, Jiří Menzel, Ewald Schorm, and others. Each of them maintained their own style and poetics.

After grabbing attention with her documentaries, Chytilová took an entirely different tack artistically with *Daisies* (1966). This parable of nihilism and hypocrisy in modern society, disguised as a madcap comedy about two girls playing a game of truth or dare, made European cinematographic history. Contributing to the film's distinctive visual aspect was Chytilová's husband at the time, cinematographer Jaroslav Kučera, and artist and screenwriter Ester Krumbachová. Three years later, this creative team delved into an even more radical experiment, resulting in the highly stylised *The Fruit of Paradise* (1969), an allegory about original sin and of the nature of good and evil, with visual and colorful symbolism playing an important role.

After a hiatus of several years, Chytilová managed to get back to work even as Czechoslovakia was at the peak of socialist severity in the 1970s. There would be no more experiments like *Daisies*. Instead, Chytilová strayed into satire and less radical parables, though she did not back down from the high demands she placed on herself. She made the comedy-tinged fiction films *The Apple Game* (1976) and *Prefab Story* (1979), turning her attention to investigating the tragicomic nature of human origins. Her next film, *Calamity* (1981), ushered in her collaboration with the well-known Czech actor and theater performer Bolek Polívka, which continued in the films *The Jester and the Queen* (1987) and *The Inheritance or:*



The Jester and the Queen

Fuckoffguysgoodday (1992). She also enjoyed success with the psychological detective film *Wolf's Chalet* (1986), which continues to appeal to audiences today.

Chytilová's work is pervaded by themes of morality, both on the individual and societal levels. She paid rapt attention to motifs of personal failure, wasted lives, and risking life, as can be seen — again under the guise of comedy — in the films *The Very Late Afternoon of a Faun* (1983) and *Tainted Horseplay* (1988). In her later years, Chytilová put less emphasis on comedy, as was evident in the less popular films *Traps* (1998) and *Pleasant Moments* (2006), and particularly *Expulsion from Paradise* (2001), which left critics and viewers alike nonplussed.

“I'm not interested in what people say”

Chytilová never particularly sought the interest of others, whether her peers, audiences, or critics. “I never expect success, I care about the thing itself,” she said in

A Bagful of Fleas





© NFA

© NFA

The Apple Game

an interview. "I don't care what people are going to think. My mother always used to badger me with that. As a girl, I was considered a complete eccentric because I wanted to wear different clothes than everyone else had, and then, when we'd go for walks, my mother would have me walk up ahead of her. How immoral that is, to pretend not to know a loved one just because you don't like what they're wearing. Being ashamed of their actions, fine, but for what they look like? Or because their behavior is out of the ordinary, or they make a mistake? You should actually be standing up for them, shouldn't you? I always found convention irritating. People have a tendency to disappear into the crowd."

Chytilová continued to work with documentary filmmaking throughout her career. After her initial forays into *cinéma vérité*, she made a number of noteworthy documentary films and television series. In 1978, she released a nostalgic meditation on old age and the meaning of life, *Time Is Relentless*. In 1984, she intrigued audiences with her expressive, stylised film essay *Prague: The Restless Heart of Europe*, in which she tried to capture the *genius loci* of Prague at the time. The series *Flights and Falls* (2000) takes an empathetic look at the fortunes of three noted Czech photographers: Václav Chochola, Zdeněk Tmej, and her own erstwhile husband, Karel Ludwig. She also dealt with the position of women in Czech society (for example the series *Troublemakers*, 2007) and with portraits of specific women who were close to her, such as *Searching for Ester*, in which she tracks down her former colleague, artist, screenwriter, director, and a major figure of the Czechoslovak New Wave, Ester Krumbachová.

Chytilová won an array of awards at home and abroad, including the Grand Prix at the Bergamo Film Festival for *Daisies*, the Silver Hugo at the Chicago Film Festival for *The Apple Game*, a Golden Bear nomination at the Berlinale (*Wolf's Chalet*), a nomination for the Palme

BORIS NELEPO,
curator of the Chytilová's retrospective at DocLisboa:

A maven of world cinema and the first lady of the Czech New Wave, Věra Chytilová was an uncompromising and tenacious filmmaker who always recognized the true value of freedom. The early, "vintage" Chytilová is indebted to surrealism, symbolism, and the allegorical tradition. Dramatically different from her is the Chytilová of the 1970s and '80s, one that reinvented herself, at no detriment to artistic integrity, as a virtuoso of slices of everyday life and whose chronicles still allow us a glimpse into the Czechoslovak society of the time. Her crowning achievement of that period, *Prefab Story*, stands to this day as one of the most scathing, tragic, and perfectly crafted monuments to the communist project (here she, strangely enough, overlaps with Kira Muratova, whose late-period motifs Chytilová had largely anticipated). It only gets more interesting from that point on: a horror (*Wolf's Chalet*) is followed by one of the world's first movies about AIDS (*Tainted Horseplay*); then comes the subversive folk comedy *The Inheritance or Fuckoffguysgoodday*, so accurate in its portrayal of the country's transition to capitalism; and finally, the radical feminist perspective of *Traps* is succeeded by *Searching for Ester*, the loving tribute to a close friend and coauthor.

... This is why it is of great importance for us to present as thorough a retrospective as possible, including Chytilová's documentaries, shorts, and made-for-TV films. Making sense of a decade-spanning career of such complexity is not an archivist's task; on the contrary, Chytilová's distinctive film language, ideas, and formal devices are future-oriented inasmuch as they help us gain a better insight into today's filmmaking landscape.

d'Or (*The Fruit of Paradise*), the Special Prize for Outstanding Contribution to World Cinema at the 2000 Karlovy Vary IFF, the Czech Lion for Artistic Achievement (2001), and more.

Since her death in 2014, Chytilová's work has screened around the world, for example at the London retrospective *Defiance and Compassion* (2015), which presented 13 of her films. But none of these exhibitions has been as extensive as the one currently being prepared for the DocLisboa festival. It will be the largest ever showcase of Chytilová's films, giving visitors the chance to see nearly her entire oeuvre, from her first student film, *Cat-erwauling* (1960), to her last feature fiction film, *Pleasant Moments* (2006).

TORONTO IFF

SHOT IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC



© Julie Vrabelová, courtesy of SF Studios

energy of Toronto on opening night," said Piers Handling, director and CEO of TIFF. "The story of this nail-biter matchup changed the sport of tennis forever, and the outstanding performances from LaBeouf and Gudnason will be a spectacular way for festivalgoers to kick things off."

The film takes place in Sweden, the US, and Monaco, with scenes filmed in Sweden as well as Prague. The three stars are Shia LaBeouf (John McEnroe), Sverrir Gudnason (Björn Borg), and Stellan Skarsgård as Borg's coach, Lennart Bergelin, with Tuva Novotny, an actress of Czech origin, cast by director Janus Metz Pedersen in the role of Borg's girlfriend. Filming in Prague took place in August 2016, in cooperation with the Czech company Sirena Film. The Czech Film Fund provided incentive support amounting to 415,000 euros, with the filmmakers spending almost 2.3 million euros in the Czech Republic.

"Prague was the setting mainly for the scenes from Monaco and London, where much of the story takes place," said producer Nicastro. "We first scouted locations in London, then Latvia and Estonia. We found great locations here, with incentives and local organizations playing a role as well. Sirena Film is very good at coping with big productions, and often works with Scandinavian producers. They have a good reputation. We were happy with everything here."/>

From Prague to Toronto

by Hedvika Petrželková

The Swedish film *Borg/McEnroe*, shot in Prague last summer, will open this year's Toronto International Film Festival. Set in the 1980s, the movie depicts a key match in tennis history.

Borg/McEnroe is a biopic drama about two athletes, both at the top of their careers, whose personalities couldn't have been more different.

"They called Borg 'the Iceberg.' He was the handsome 'good guy,' who kept his emotions in check and everybody loved. McEnroe stood out as the spirited rebel, nicknamed 'SuperBrat.' They were like fire and ice, almost completely opposite athletic archetypes," said producer Fredrik Wikström Nicastro of SF Studios in an interview with the Czech daily during shooting in Prague.

The pivotal scene in the film is the famous 1980 championship match at Wimbledon, where the then 24-year-old Swedish "Iceberg" confronted his 21-year-old American rival, known for his uncontrollable outbursts. It was these scenes that were filmed in Prague, at the Štvanice tennis courts,

which for a time morphed into the Wimbledon arena.

"*Borg/McEnroe* has a powerful tension about it, on a par with the electric



© Julie Vrabelová, courtesy of SF Studios



Nina:

Swim Away From Life

Twelve-year-old Nina is having a hard time. Her parents are getting a divorce and her world is falling apart. So begins the tender story of the second feature by successful documentary director Juraj Lehotský, which will be screened at this year's Toronto IFF. The movie was shot as a Slovak-Czech coproduction and was supported by the Czech Film Fund.

On the one hand, Nina is a very special girl, but on the other, she's just an ordinary teenager. She has lots of hobbies, and her biggest passion is swimming. At the pool she finds the calm and support and everything else she lacks at home — especially important now, with her mom and dad splitting up. They may claim they're only doing what's best for her, but they act as though they care only about themselves. Their fights scare Nina. She feels abandoned and deceived. With the one remaining sure thing in her life competitive swimming, when it looks like she won't be able to attend a swim meet, she decides to make a radical move.

"Psychologists say divorce is like a small death of the family," says director Lehotský. "We often only look at it through adult eyes. I wanted to examine the issue from a different perspective. How does a child cope with all the difficulties that come with her parents' divorce?"

Nina is Lehotský's second feature film. His debut, *Miracle* (2013), premiered at the Karlovy Vary IFF in the East of the

West section and took home the award for Special Jury Mention. As documentary director he has also been a success, with his *Blind Loves* (2008) winning the C.I.C.A.E Art Cinema Award in its premiere in the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs at Cannes. Screenwriter Marek Leščák has previously collaborated with Lehotský on both *Blind Loves* and *Miracle*, and apart from Lehotský, he also works closely with director Martin Šulík (*The Garden, Orbis Pictus*) and other Slovak filmmakers, such as Jaro Vojtek and Iveta Grófová (*Little Harbour*, a prizewinner at Berlinale 2017).

At first glance, *Nina* may not seem to tell a new story, but ultimately, Lehotský and his cowriter Leščák have created a very special film — a sensitive, fragile story with authentic feelings and experiences. "I realize the subject matter isn't especially original," says Lehotský, "but we were increasingly aware of how many families around us were breaking apart, and how normal it was becoming for children to lose their sense of having a family. So we wanted to ask, How does a child experience it? How does she feel? Both Marek and I

have children. When we were writing the script, I tried to pay very close attention to how my children view and experience things. I consider myself fortunate to have a complete family, but still, we've been through some rough patches too. So I was drawing on my own experience, to a certain extent."

The story in *Nina* is mostly told from the child's point of view. "We bring out the small things children point out that parents don't necessarily want to see, so the film in a way becomes a reflection on us, the parents," says Lehotský. "We see how when we're self-centered and egoistic, some important things start to slip between our fingers — the time we get to spend with our children, the time right here and now that won't be coming back."

The director makes it clear that it wasn't his intention to moralize or to criminalize divorce, but simply to show how important family is to a child, and what happens when the adults lose control. "We also tried to highlight the small things that are so important in relationships, in family life, for a child's experience — the kinds of things we often overlook, unfortunately," he says. "Children are so beautiful when they're



growing up, asking questions, looking to talk to you when they need you, when they see something they haven't seen before. But we adults are sometimes too caught up in our own problems, our own lives and failures, and we miss the moments when we should be listening to our children, when they talk to us about their bizarre plans and dreams." /



Laika:

A Film With a Long History and a Promising Future

by Kamila Boháčková

Laika is a feature-length stereoscopic puppet film about the first dog in space, produced by experienced Czech animator Aurel Klimt. The premiere is slated for release November 3, 2017, the 60th anniversary of Laika's fatal cosmic flight.

The Czech Republic has upped its output of puppet films in recent years, in every genre: shorts, student films, features, and TV series. Most of them build on the storied tradition of Czech puppetry, but several have shown an ambition to branch out in a new direction. Radek Beran's feature-length *The Little Man* (2015) brought the aesthetics of puppet theater into Czech film, showing clearly the puppets' strings and wires, while Jan Balej, in *Little From the Fish Shop* (2015), combined puppets with digital animation. *First Snow* (2015), a student film by Lenka Ivančíková, introduced animal puppets, and *Deep in Moss* (2015), by Filip Pošivač and Barbora Valecká, which started life as a short film before being reborn as an online TV series at Stream.cz, featured fantastical forest creatures. *The Christmas Ballad* (2016), a puppet short by Michal

Žabka, with a screenplay by the late great of Czech puppet animation, Břetislav Pojar, was an attempt at animated sci-fi.

Now, Aurel Klimt's *Laika*, currently in production, is also science fiction, but in musical theater style. It tells the hard-knocks story of Kudryavka, a street dog on the outskirts of a Russian megalopolis who is caught and forced to become a pioneer of space travel, changing her name to Laika. In the wake of Laika's launch, other animals are also shot into space, not only from Russia, but also from the United States. The animals wander around the cosmos before settling happily on a distant planet where they befriend the local life-forms. After a short time, however, they are joined by Russian astronaut Yuri Leftkin, followed, in true Cold War spirit, by his American

rival, Neil Knockout. Suddenly the animals' harmonious lifestyle is in jeopardy.

"I find it fascinating how humans put themselves above other living creatures on Earth, how they decide whether or not they have the right to exist, and how haughtily they treat them, especially in the name of science. I think it's a big topic, and a perfect fit for animated film," says Klimt, the movie's art director, screenwriter, editor, director, and producer all rolled into one.

The film's first half-hour is based on actual events from the life of Laika, who was shot into space on November 3, 1957, but the remaining 60 minutes are pure fiction. When Klimt first began considering the topic, in the 1990s, information from the archive of the Russian space program was just starting to be released. During the Cold War, all the public knew was the official propaganda about the peppy little doggy. Little did they suspect that the unwilling first astronaut died after just a few hours in orbit, from stress and overheating, or that she was launched on a hastily prepared Sputnik that was never meant to return to Earth. Nikita Khrushchev, the Russian leader, ordered the flight nevertheless, in the rush to beat the United States with the first living creature in orbit, scoring a propaganda victory. So it was that a street dog became a casualty of the Cold War.



"All this was my main inspiration: the real historical events and the propaganda created around them," explains Klimt. "I'm fascinated by the absurdity of certain aspects of Russian society and politics."

Klimt's filmography includes several black comedies inspired by Russian culture, including *Mashkin Killed Koshkin* (1995) and *The Fall* (1999), both based on short stories by Daniil Kharmis.

From the Stage to the Screen

The idea of making an animated film about the canine cosmonaut had a lengthy evolution. In 2000, Aurel Klimt, together with artist Martin Velíšek and musician Miro-



slav Wanek, created a puppet theater show called *The Enchanted Bell*, based on Klimt's successful short film *Of the Enchanted Bell* (1998). It was such a success that the theater that produced the show expressed interest in another project by the same team, and the three creators agreed it should be about animals and space. Thus *Laika, Qin and Gagarin* (2003) was born.

Writing for the theater led Klimt to his central theme, which is the relationship between humans and animals. At the time, he was thinking about a feature-length puppet film with the same story and subject matter.

"I saw it as a good opportunity to test the material for a feature-length animated film, since the great gift of the theatrical form is direct feedback from the audience," Klimt explains. "In film, you only get feedback after the fact, once the work is finished and can't be changed, whereas the theater is a living organism. You can react to the audience and improve the show — strengthen what works, change what doesn't."

Securing funding was a lengthy process. In 2006, Klimt applied for a grant for the screenplay from the Czech Film Fund, and a grant for development from the Media program (now under Creative Europe). *Laika*, with a budget of 2,231,000 euros (the Czech Film Fund ultimately provided nearly 846,000 euros), is a purely Czech project — a surprising achievement at a time when it is extremely difficult to fund the expensive and lengthy process that a feature-length animation project requires without international coproduction, and not only in the Czech Republic.

Klimt, who is also acting as producer on the project, originally conceived *Laika* as a Czech-Slovak production, but says it turned out to be above his production capacities, even though some of the artists involved are Slovak. "It was key that the Czech coproduction partners had

INTRODUCTION

LAIKA



their own equipment and facilities, which they invested in the project as payment in kind," he says. "That way, the need for cash was lowered to a minimum."

Thanks to the grants for development, after three years the first technical storyboard was complete. That was followed by drafts by artists František Lipták and Martin Velíšek, then the puppets were created and a pilot produced. Then, Klimt decided to make *Laika* into a stereoscopic film — that is, a film we perceive (usually using special glasses) in three dimensions.

Adventure of Stereoscopy

There still haven't been made many stereoscopic animated films made in the Czech Republic. The first one was *Fimfarum: The Third Time Lucky 3D* (2011), a sequel to the feature films based on the children's novel *Fimfarum*, by Jan Werich. In 2010, there was a stereoscopic film recording of the puppet theater performance *Harvie on Stage*, but it wasn't produced as a film. Now, however, *Harvie* ("Hurvínek" in Czech), a children's favorite in the Czech Republic, will appear in the new stereoscopic animated film *Harvie and the Magic Museum*, premiering August 31, 2017. Still, it isn't a puppet film, but a CGI animation.

On the international scene, 3D is very common today, especially in mainstream animation, though it's generally used only as a gimmick to attract audiences. There are a few exceptions where it's actually justified, such as the 3D version of *Coraline* (2008) by Henry Selick, who was one of the first to combine puppet animation with stereoscopy.

Klimt, in working on *Laika*, also chose stereoscopy for artistic reasons, particularly because of the zero-gravity scenes in space. "It's just very well suited to science fiction," he says. He spent a year finetuning the stereoscopy and motion control system with his team in order to use it correctly and to its full potential.

Still, Klimt insists the most demanding part wasn't the stereoscopy, but the handwork: creating the scenography, the decorations, the puppets, and animating the film. Shooting it all on two images instead of one wasn't that much extra work by comparison. Production itself — creating the props, decorations and puppets, then animation and post-production — began in 2010 and is still ongoing. According to Klimt, along with the extra time required by the stereoscopy, the process was about three times as demanding as his previous films.

Crowdfunding for 3D

Now, after more than 10 years of work, *Laika* is nearly finished, and Klimt and his team are seeking financing through Kickstarter.

Klimt explains: "We still need to do post-production on the last third of the film and finalize it to feature length. We're short on funds for some post-production processes and putting together a large exhibition timed to open with the premiere, this November. The way crowdfunding works, if we need another million for *Laika*, we have to raise two. Half the money goes to the Kickstarter commission, the people who helped me make and manage the campaign, and a considerable amount also goes to donor rewards. We need the money so we can be as maximalist in image post-production as we were for the shooting, and also so we can add English dubbing. That's very important, since in stereoscopy you can't use subtitles."

The Puppetry Tradition Today

Klimt sees a divergence from the tradition of Czech puppet animation in the faster rate of edits, because of the faster perception of modern-day moviegoers. He also views the use of new technologies, such as CGI and stereoscopy, as an advance. Still, he believes technology shouldn't be the dominant factor.

"In contemporary western puppet animation, the technology often takes over from the story, the message, the playfulness and joy that spring from imagination shaped by human hands. That's where I see the potential for Czech work to capture an audience and break through," Klimt says.

Throughout his life, Klimt says what has attracted him to puppet animation is mainly the chance to work with your hands and to improvise on set while shooting.

"That way, you get unplanned nuances, which come from the situation on set at that moment, when the puppets are speaking to the animator and offering their own actorly possibilities. To me that process is irreplaceable. The result shows the touch of the sensitive, imperfect human hand, which gives it a creative humanity that's impossible any other way." /

Beyond the Borders of Czech Experience

by Hedvika Petrželková

An attempt at resuscitating a famous Russian car manufacturer, a stylised portrait of teenagers in the Czech-German border area, a Slovak student who starts a nationalist militia out of fear. Those are the themes of three upcoming Czech documentaries, promising an interesting experience within the European context.



In addition to promising, original topics, the projects also have in common the fact that their authors travel outside the country to their objects of interest — or at least to the borders.

Soviet Dream on the River

The fate of a languishing Russian car factory, tagged to be brought back to life under new Swedish management, is the topic of *The Russian Job*, journalist Petr

Horký's cinematic debut. He came across the subject by chance when he was sent to the Avtovaz car factory, which produces the famous Lada cars, to write a report for a business publication.

"The management invited me because this was the first time an iconic Russian business was being handed over to a foreigner, a Western manager. His job was to get this unprofitable behemoth into shape. After I came back to Prague, the experience stayed in my head. It was

a fascinating setting: the crumbling stage set of the Soviet dream on the river Volga. There are people in that town who really lived the Soviet dream in the '70s and '80s, and they refuse to abandon it. And suddenly, here comes someone from the West, destroying those dreams. I thought it would make for a great film," says Horký.

The resulting film isn't a report on automobile manufacturing, but on the conflict of two mindsets: the Western outlook on the one hand, and the



post-Soviet on the other. "Its representatives live in the past, which they remember as the time when their city was the youngest in the Soviet Union, a destination for talented people from all over the country: athletes, artists. The city built cars for the whole Communist bloc and was proud of it. That's no longer the case today, but the locals still live in denial that there's any problem. As it turns out, however, the Western side is also naïve, believing that anything can be changed, that any bold objective can be accomplished," Horký says.

The shooting is finished and the film is now being edited. "We spent a long time looking for a way to grasp the story. *The Russian Job* is filmed in long, beautifully composed shots, which complicates the editor's work. He can't split the scene into shots: He either uses it or gets rid of it," explains the film's producer, Martin Jůza (Krutart).

Funding comes mostly from the Czech Film Fund, with Czech Television as coproducer. "First we got some money for development from the Czech Film Fund. That's how we discovered European documentary pitching forums, thanks to which we arranged some pre-sales and a sales agent. We've already sold the film to Sweden and the Balkans, and we also have interest in Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Denmark and other countries," Jůza says.

The film has a budget of 209,000 euros, and the filmmakers would like to see it premiere at one of the prestigious documentary film festivals. Thanks to pitchings and workshops, we had the opportunity to meet representatives from many festivals, so we believe an interesting international premiere could work out," says Jůza.

Marching Into History With the Militias

"For several years now, I've been noticing Central Europe, including the Czech Republic and Slovakia, shifting east. I think it's not so much a geographical as a value-based division: egalitarianism versus authority, openness versus isolation." These are the thoughts that led director Jan Gerbert to the theme of his film, which has the working title *When the War Comes*. Then when he found out there was a militia of mostly teenagers in Slovakia, just a few hundred miles from his home, the theme took on a clearer shape.

The main character in Gerbert's film, now in production, is the fresh-faced university student Peter. He has a nice car and a girlfriend, but his main interest lies elsewhere: in the forest mountains, with his own militia, Slovenskí branci (Slovak Recruits). With 400 young people, most of them teenagers, and units throughout Slovakia, it's one of the largest paramilitary organizations in

Eastern Europe. Peter himself underwent the same training from the Russian Cossacks as the Ukrainian separatists. The reason? He fears Europe is heading toward an inevitable clash of civilizations, and he is determined to defend the Slavic world with a gun in his hand.

"Most of the militia members looked completely normal at first. I found out they study at grammar schools and universities, they lead normal lives by day. That was actually a bigger shock than if they'd started doing the Nazi salute," says Gerbert of his first visit with militia members. He describes the situation as similar to what it was in 1930s Germany, when Nazism succeeded in addressing normal, mainstream society. "The parents acknowledge the militia's activities; the police almost always leave them alone. On TV, the militia members hear politicians like Zeman, Orbán, and Trump who say and think the same things they do. This just encourages Peter."

According to Gerbert, though, Peter has greater ambitions than simply leading the militia: He wants to go down as a great figure in Slovak history. "With the Recruits, he practices working with people, speaking publicly. He's created a kind of model totalitarian society and proclaimed himself chief for life. During training he takes away the Recruits' names and gives them numbers instead. I think he'd like to apply this model to all of Slovakia one day." For Gerbert, the film is mainly about the birth of totalitarianism.

The film, which has a preliminary budget of 250,000 euros, is a production by Pink Productions, HBO Europe, and the Croatian coproducers Hulahop Film & Art Production. The authors had successful presentations at a number of international pitching forums (Good Pitch – Britdoc, ZagrebDox, East Doc Platform, DOK Co-Pro Market), and will also present at the Gap-Financing Market, which will be held during the 74th Venice Film Festival. The premiere is planned for the end of 2017.

On the Edges of Genre

Creative duo Lukáš Kokeš and Klára Tasovská travelled to the Czech-German

border region to capture the lives of local teenagers. But they envision *Nothing Like Before* as more than just a documentary, instead operating “on the edges of genre.”

“We wanted to make a film that was neither documentary nor feature. Just like our topic is on the edges of the Czech Republic, we’re on the edges of genre. Everything in the film is documentary, but we tried to choose a way of shooting and editing that would bring the form and language closer to the effect of a live-action art film,” says Kokeš. “I wanted to use documentary methods to achieve that moment in cinematography I love when we as viewers feel close to the characters, when we experience the world through their eyes, when we’re close to them, part of their lives for a moment.”

He and Klára Tasovská together wrote the story, featuring the lives of adolescent schoolchildren. “We thought the last years of high school life offered enough twists, dynamics, energy, and the kind of exhibitionism we needed for our method of filming. We were also looking for a place that would be interesting in itself, which we found in the North Bohemian borderlands, around the city of Varnsdorf.”

Minorities: Fugue, Mečiar, Occupation 1968



An increasing number of minority coproductions is breathing new life into filmmaking in the Czech Republic, in the documentary world and features alike. We look at remarkable projects currently in various stages of production; all of them were supported by the Czech Film Fund.

Fugue is the portrait of a promising Argentinian piano virtuoso who has spent four years in a Buenos Aires psychiatric hospital. Now, he is trying to come back to life outside the asylum and in the concert halls. The director is a French producer and director Artemio Benki, who lives in the Czech Republic. His previous credits include the films *Marguerite* and *Personal Shopper*. From the Czech side, the producer is his company, Artcam Films. The foreign producers are Golden Girls Filmproduktion & Filmservices GmbH (AT), Petit à Petit Production (FR), and Sergio L. Pra – Lomo Cine (AR). The film should be finished by 2018.

Another interesting portrait is *The Taste of Power*, by director Tereza Nvotová, who this year successfully premiered her feature-length live action title, *Filthy* (Rotterdam IFF). The new film tells the fate of former Slovak prime minister Vladimír Mečiar, who came to power in post-Velvet Revolution Slovakia. Charismatic, powerful, and “loved by the nation,” the politician’s rule was

marked by autocracy, abuse of power, and major scandals. The film’s producer is PubRes (SK), with Negativ (CZ) and HBO Europe as coproducers for the Czech side. The film should be completed in October 2017.

In order to make *Occupation 1968*, producer Peter Kerekes approached a group of directors. This method, uncommon in documentary filmmaking, was an outgrowth of the film’s topic, which is the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 by the armies of five former Warsaw Pact states. Fifty years later, five directors from those countries – Evdokia Moskvina, Linda Dombrowszky, Magdalena Szymkow, Marie Elisa Schiedt, and Stefan Komandarev – are each making a short film about the invasion from the perspective of individuals who took part in it. The film, a coproduction between Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Bulgaria, is set to premiere in February 2018.

D Is for Division is a Lithuanian coproduction from the experienced Czech producer Radim Procházka, working with producer Guntis Trekeris (Ego Media) and director Davis Simanis. The picture, inspired by the events of 1940, is intended as a cinematic essay on boundaries, both geographical and metaphorical. The premiere is planned for this October. /

Nothing Like Before



Produced by nutprodukce (Tomáš Hrubý, Pavla Janoušková Kubečková), the project is coproduced by HBO Europe, which joined in the development stages. The budget is around 150,000 euros, and the film is slated to be finished this autumn. The young team from nutprodukce previously collaborated with HBO Europe on the widely acclaimed feature-length miniseries *Burning Bush* (2013), directed by Agnieszka Holland and based on true stories from modern Czech history, as well as the TV series *Wasteland* (2016). /

INTRODUCING

INTO THE WIND



SOFIE ŠUSTKOVÁ, born 1989, studied at the Film Academy of Miroslav Ondříček in Písek and graduated in 2014 with the short *iDentity*. She has since written and directed short films and commercials. *Into the Wind* is her debut feature as a writer and director.

Limitations Will Set You Free

by Louise H. Johansen

Independent independent! That's how writer-director Sofie Šustková and producer Lucie Gorovoj describe their debut. They went out on a limb and shot their first feature on a boat in Greece without big financial support from the state.

Why even try? "The subject was urgent and the story needed to be told," says Sofie Šustková. Her feature debut, *Into the Wind*, combines the freedom-seeking of a road movie, the claustrophobia of a chamber piece, and a sailboat ménage à trois. But what does it really take to make your first feature film on the cheap? To find out, we caught up with the filmmakers, who are currently in post-production.

Urgency

The film is set in Greece, with a plot that revolves around a brother and sister, Matyáš (24) and Natálie (22), who have left behind their obligations in Prague to live a carefree life at sea. They work as caretakers on a boat where they also act as captains on tourist

trips. Then, one day, along comes Honza (26), an up-and-coming documentary filmmaker and the son of the boat's Czech owner. Life is sweet, soaking in the sunshine and fresh air, and the chemistry onboard is perfect. But eventually, their worlds and values collide, since Honza is there mainly to document the refugee crisis.

"Things are really changing all over Europe right now, and we felt like it was now or never with this movie, so we decided to go for it," says Sofie, explaining why they decided to make the movie at this particular moment and in Greece specifically.

Another reason she chose a boat as the setting for her movie is it's a very familiar environment for her. "I'm a passionate sailor, my father's a captain, and for me, being on a boat is the most intimate freedom there is.

She continues, “I was born after the Velvet Revolution, so freedom is one of my main topics. Generation me me me, that’s us. The main thing about freedom for us is our ego — what we do with our freedom. For a long time now, I’ve considered this a problem. For me, freedom is something wider.”

Honza’s search for a reality bigger than himself opens Natálie’s eyes, causing her to pull away from her escapist brother and their intimate relationship, which resembles that of two lovers.

Authenticity: Make it Real

When we meet with the filmmakers, they are about to start post-production and seem to have shaken off the worst of their experiences from the month they spent shooting in Greece. But it wasn’t easy.

Apart from lacking a big budget, shooting on location has its advantages, the director adds. “Ultimately, I think when you watch the film you can see it was real. My hope is that gives it that extra-special ‘something.’”

As director, Sofie Šustková emphasizes that it had to feel real to the actors and everyone onboard in order to keep their spirits up. “We made nine versions of the script, and the last one was with the actors. We did some rehearsals and they started to make stuff up for their characters, what they believed about them.

The crew mainly consisted of Czech professionals. Cinematographer Jan Pivoňka was a friend of Sofie’s from film school days. And besides that, it was staff from the production company they allied with early on to make the shoot possible without state subsidies. Plus family! Producer Lucie Gorovoj, Sofie’s sister, brought in some start-up capital, and they even turned to close family’s friends in Greece who owned a local hotel that served as their base. That way they didn’t have to sleep on the boats as they had planned initially.

Lower Than Low-budget

“In the Czech Republic, you need to throw yourself at the mercy of the state and just trust you’ll get support. Either that or you need to find your own sources of money,” Sofie explains.

She says they did initially apply to the Czech Film Fund, but that the early script had issues. Apart from the pro-



“A lot of people really hit bottom. It was so physical some people almost couldn’t get up the next day they were so tired.”

ducer’s own savings, the sisters managed to team up with the commercial Czech production company Cartel, Michal Nýdrle, the second producer, as well as receiving in-kind support from post-production facilities who came in as co-producers based on the fact that they all shared a passion for sailing.

It’s hard to know what the actual budget was, says Sofie. “In real numbers, it’s lower than the lowest low-budget in the Czech Republic.”

They also launched an innovative web platform to promote the project at an early stage.

Limitation Is Key

Working outside the system doesn’t mean you have to go it all on your own, Sofie says. “I consulted with everyone around me, right from the start, since I was really curious to know their ideas.

Czech dramaturgist Jiří Blažek consulted on the script, and Ivo Trajkov, the Macedonian director-producer-screenwriter and head of FAMU’s editing department, was invited into the editing room to help with the background story.

“I’m really happy we were foolish and young. I learned a lot from the process. We found out that even with nothing you can still make something, and that’s amazing.”

“We didn’t have anyone to show us the way. We had to figure it all ourselves.”

FUTURE FRAMES

Young Talent Damián Vondrášek: A Year in Prison

by Iva Přivřelová

Prison can take many shapes. For the main character in the short film *Imprisoned*, it's the feeling of inadequacy. For young Czech filmmaker Damián Vondrášek, *Imprisoned* is a breakthrough.

The 27-minute drama Vondrášek made in his second year at FAMU earned him a nomination for the national Magnesia Award for the Best Student Film and a spot in this year's Future Frames program at the Karlovy Vary International Festival. With this also came a surge of attention from Czech media, ever on the lookout for the new, hot talent.

The director describes the story of his film as follows: "A day in the life of a man who finds himself in a complicated, dramatic situation. He has lost his job at school and his disciplinarian father-in-law is always nagging him about being unemployed. One way out could be a job in prison, so he visits the jail to find out what the work would require. Then he has to make up his mind whether he wants to take the job, even though it doesn't correspond with his personal nature and beliefs."

Not every second-year student shoots a film of such length and ambition. "It was supposed to be 15 minutes long. We went over on both time and budget. But the conditions are favorable for students at FAMU. We have a basic budget, technical facilities, so you have a base to build on. But of course, if you want to shoot something a bit bigger, with extras, you also need some money outside of school. *Imprisoned* was financed with a combina-

tion of school money, a school grant, the prize money from FAMUfest for my previous film, plus the crew's own personal contributions," Vondrášek says.

He says he first came up with the story idea, then with a location that would intensify it. "At first, the idea of shooting a student film in a real prison seemed impossible. But we were clear that the film needed an authentic environment," the director says.

The problem was, no jail wanted to allow a student film crew into their facility. "Our executive producer wrote to practically every Czech prison. Finally, we had a breakthrough when I realized my roommate's father was the director of a prison. Once the staff understood that we weren't out to make an action movie about a great escape, they became more cooperative," the director said during the after-screening Q&A at Karlovy Vary.

After a few months of negotiations, the young filmmakers were even able to choose their location. The final result in the film is a combination of three different Czech prisons, out of ten Vondrášek visited. Altogether the crew spent more than a year working on the project. "Shooting itself took nine days," he says. "A big part of the process was editing, which took four months."



© FAMU



© FAMU

Imprisoned screened at FAMUfest, where it won the award for Best Cinematography, and the Czech Film Center selected *Imprisoned* as Czech candidate to the Future Frames section. Then KVIFF artistic director Karel Och and his programming colleague Anna Purkrábková chose it for the final 10 out of 26 films by students or graduates of European film academies.

Future Frames an Intense Experience

"I was really surprised at how many activities we had on our schedule. It was definitely very beneficial for us," Vondrášek says of his time at Karlovy Vary. "I can name several things in terms of new information and experience, but still the biggest thing I'm grateful for was the chance to present the film at an A-level festival. We also had some press meetings, which is still very new for me, but I guess it's important to learn how to deal with. It was a great, intense experience."



Film Festival Karlovy Vary

Damián Vondrášek (right) at KVIFF.

During the July festival, he met nine other early-career European filmmakers. "Since most of the participants are finishing up their studies and entering the professional world, we mainly talked about opportunities for emerging filmmakers in our countries. Plus the number of films produced in our countries per year and the approach of national funding institutions and how it affects our chances," Vondrášek says.

"In that sense, the recent situation in the Czech Republic seems quite promising. I hope this positive trend will lead to more international attention for new Czech films," he adds. Vondrášek is currently working on his graduation film, and notes that FAMU has recently started supporting festival attendance for more of its students' works.

Of the nine other Future Frames talents at Karlovy Vary, he says the only one he knew previously was Michal Blaško from Slovakia, who collaborates with FAMU. "His *Atlantis, 2003* is a great film, and I'd seen it before the festival. The film that made the biggest impression on me at KVIFF was *Ljubljana – München 15:27* by Katarina Morano from Slovenia. I admire the way her storytelling is so intimate and image-oriented."

Vondrášek says Future Frames also gave him a chance to meet and talk with Denis Côté, the distinctive Canadian director of *Bestiaire* and *Vic + Flo Saw a Bear* (awarded the Alfred Bauer Prize at the Berlinale). "I didn't know much about him before, except that he's very original. But he was really open and friendly. His main advice was not to get too obsessed with funding. To be flexible and try to find alternative ways," Vondrášek says.

Asked to name the filmmakers that most inspire him, the young Czech director cited Romanian Corneliu Porumboiu (*12:08 East of Bucharest*) and Dane Tobias Lindholm (*A War*).

Pitch & Feedback at KVIFF 2017



A Checkpoint for Future Award-Winners

by Martin Kudláč

Promising feature film projects in the early stages of development get the chance to connect with international experts at the Karlovy Vary Pitch & Feedback platform every year. In 2017, representatives of six Czech and Slovak films took the stage, with an eye to landing release deals outside their home countries.

“The event gave us great insight into the upcoming Czech and Slovakian projects in development. In particular, the individual consultations prior to the pitching were a perfect chance to get to know the filmmakers, the producers, and their projects,” said Oliver Rittweger of the Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung, one of this year’s international experts invited by the organizers - the Czech Film Center and the Slovak Film Institute. He praised the line-up, noting, “The organizers selected a nice range of genres, ranging from political thriller to road-movie drama.”

Angeliki Vergou of the Crossroads Co-production Forum, another expert panelist, said, “I can see that the organizers are making every effort to get the best results possible out of the event through the small changes that they have made, such as having the informal consultation one day before the formal pitching to the industry audience, which gives the presenters time to perhaps change something in their pitch or stress a particular detail that is needed.”

Vergou added, “What I like about the concept of Pitch & Feedback is the fact that it is just that. It doesn’t involve awards and the added stress of competition; it is not a coproduction market. It’s just a presentation of projects to a friendly industry audience, where they can get feedback for their next steps and test out their ideas.”

Two Pitch & Feedback alumni, Václav Kadrnka’s *Little Crusader* and Peter Bebjak’s *The Line*, netted accolades in this year’s Karlovy Vary main competition, Kadrnka



Ali Mosaffa’s mystical thriller Halves was presented by co-writer Kaveh Daneshmand and producer Jordi Niubó.

taking the festival’s top honor. Others are also notching successes. Iveta Grófová’s *Little Harbour* took home a Crystal Bear from Berlin, while Gyorgy Kristóf’s feature debut, *Out*, screened in the prestigious Cannes competition Un Certain Regard. Meanwhile the class of 2017, readying projects to be released in the 2019-2020 season, inspire equal expectations — and they already have a handful of awards to prove their potential, despite being just at the start of their careers.

Halves

The Czech Republic as coproduction partner is open to partnerships far beyond the usual territory of central Europe — even beyond the borders of the European continent. The latest evidence of that is a coproduction partnership with Iran on Ali Mosaffa’s project *Halves*, which is poised to become the fourth such effort. Mosaffa sets out to explore the uncharted intersection of Iran and the



INDUSTRY

PITCH & FEEDBACK

Old-Timers revolves around the twin themes of old age and coming to terms with the Communist past.

former Czechoslovakia, while probing the obscure nooks and crannies of Iranian history following the 1953 coup and its fallout. In this “mystical thriller,” Rouzbeh, the main character, flees Tehran, leaving behind his troubled family life to write a book about his father, a Communist expatriate in Czechoslovakia. When an investigation into the death of a resident in his father’s old apartment disrupts his efforts, Rouzbeh finds he is closer to the victim than he had thought. Meanwhile, he discovers facts about his father that contradict his idealized vision of him. The film’s producer, Jordi Niubó, of *i/o* post, compliments its ambitious dedication to telling this untold history, adding, “What excites me personally is its mysterious duality. It’s really a story about a departing soul and a vanishing past.”

Let There Be Light

After his award-winning and critically acclaimed feature-length fiction debut, *Eva Nová*, Slovak filmmaker Marko Škop is already developing his sophomore outing, poetically titled *Let There Be Light*. His latest project is a reaction to creeping xenophobia and right-wing extremism in Central Europe, following fortysomething Milan, a Slovak gastarbeiter in Germany, as he returns home after



his teenage son is accused of bullying and killing a classmate. After discovering his son is involved in a nationalist militia, the father uncovers the truth about his society, his family, and, last but not least, himself. “I’m interested in the theme of an ordinary man — just one out of millions, part of the xenophobic mass, with his own tiny, ignorant contribution — when he is confronted with the consequences of hatred in a harsh way through events in his own family,” Škop explains. “I want to show how easily we become enemies to our own people — to depict evil and the mistakes that can lead to it when our existence is unstable.”

Made in Czechoslovakia

Prague-based Slovak editor Jana Nemčėková is hard at work on her writing-directing fiction feature debut, *Made in Czechoslovakia*, and isn’t worried it won’t pass the Bechdel test. The film’s main character is a stuntwoman named Monika, who sets out to solve the mystery of her mother, who abandoned her as a child. Inspired by actual events, Monika’s story reflects issues in parent-child psychology, as well as the generational differences fueled by the dissolution of Czechoslovakia after 1989, in this family drama with an archetypal story line and a universal message. Referring to her project, currently in development, as a “female film,” Nemčėková says, “I’m a female author and a bad feminist. I show sex from a woman’s point of view and write about it from a woman’s perspective.” Barbara Janiřov Feglov, producer of the project, sees Nemčėkov as part of an emerging generation of talented European filmmakers, and is convinced of the film’s international potential.





Ondřej Provozník, while Dušek himself helmed *Into the Clouds We Gaze*, a provocative portrait of the young “lost generation.” *Old-Timers* is a story inspired by true events about two octogenarians, former political prisoners who take justice into their own hands to dish out revenge against a Communist prosecutor from the 1950s who was never punished for his crimes. *Old-Timers* revolves around the twin themes of old age and coming to terms with the Communist past. Ondřej Provozník says, “It’s about the contrast between what our aged characters experience as current and pressing, and the actual reality of contemporary life, which in a sense is indifferent and irrelevant to their efforts and the traumas they have experienced.”



Power

Slovak producer-director Mátýás Prikler debuted in 2013 with the feature-length family film *Fine, Thanks*. Since then, between jobs as a producer, he’s been at work on his sophomore feature, *Power*, again cowritten with Marek Leščák, who is credited on the screenplays for a raft of recent hits at home. In Prikler’s latest project, which he describes as “a political thriller with psychological insight,” he scrutinizes “the structure of power and the relativity of guilt and innocence, truth and lies.” The film tells the story of an accidental murder by a high-ranking politician. Prikler intends to shoot it using film noir visuals and desaturated colors, playing with the genre rules of political crime thrillers. *Power* is produced by Prikler’s company, Mphilms, with coproduction by Negativ on the Czech side and Kornél Mundruczó’s Proton Cinema in Slovakia. Mundruczó himself will star in the film, with DoP Gergely Palos (*A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on Existence*) on board to lens the movie.

Old-Timers

Several Czech and Slovak documentary-trained filmmakers have made the transition to fiction filmmaking lately, and the shift has proven successful. The same pattern is followed by the new project produced by Jiří Konečný, of independent film production company endorfilm, a genre film combining action-thriller with road movie, spiced up with some absurdist poeticism. The project, titled *Old-Timers*, is written and directed by the award-winning documentarian duo Martin Dušek and

Year of the Widow

The inspiration for Veronika Lišková’s first feature-length fiction effort comes from the candid recounting of a woman’s first year without her husband, which Lišková read in a magazine. She and Eugen Liška cowrote the screenplay as a minimalistic drama, based on a series of inner and outer microdramas that the lead character faces as a single parent, including financial insecurity and the Kafkaesque struggle with indifferent bureaucracy. The director says she aims to address the topic, still taboo in Czech society, while capturing “the clash between a person’s individual perception of a situation and reality, which ruthlessly goes on about its business.” Lišková came to prominence on the festival circuit with her award-winning documentary *Daniel’s World*, the thought-provoking portrait of a young pedophile. In her first fiction outing, Lišková employs a style blending documentary and fiction filmmaking methods into a docu-drama mold. /

INTERVIEW

DAVID MRNKA



This Story Really Needs to Get Out!

© Vojtěch Hurych

by Pavel Sladký

Newcomer David Mrnka teamed up with Netflix for *Milada*, bringing the tragic story of a Czech political heroine to an international audience.

Milada Horáková, the courageous Czech politician, a champion of democracy and women's rights, was a victim of judicial murder under Communist Party rule in the 1950s. Convicted of conspiracy and treason in a show trial, she was sentenced to death and hanged, despite petitions pleading for clemency on her behalf signed by Winston Churchill, Albert Einstein, and Eleanor Roosevelt.

Only six women were named among the top 50 in a recent poll for "The Greatest Czech." Milada Horáková was one of them. Everyone in the Czech Republic knows who she is, but what made you choose her as the main character for your debut?

Well, I'm Czech, so obviously I knew about her, but I didn't have that much information about her life. The

real reason for the film, though, was a visit I took to the Czech Republic while I was studying in Australia. It was in June, which is the anniversary of her execution, and I saw it on TV and realized the story is really compelling. When I went back to Australia, it stuck in my head, so I did a little bit of investigation. I visited Horáková's daughter, Jana Kánská, asked for the rights and for help, did the research, and the rest, as they say, is history.

The movie focuses on the trial and the final stages of Horáková's life. But did you also film any inner drama? Clearly, you weren't out to make a textbook heroic story.

I think movies that try to portray someone as perfect or wonderful aren't very interesting. You should always try to find out what it is that made the character tick. We're

all human beings, with our good sides and our bad sides. With her the bad side was she was very driven, and her family paid the price. Basically, she sacrificed them for the greater good, which is interesting, because often women choose to stay with their family, and they're expected to have a maternal instinct. Milada made a conscious decision to help others at the expense of her own family.

Are you a history buff? Did you insist on shooting in real locations and not changing the facts?

I do love history, but this isn't a documentary, so there is one character in the film that we changed, where I took two characters and combined them into one, because one of them was too black-and-white. But otherwise we stuck pretty much to the history. For the scenes in court, I translated very precisely what the prosecutor said. I wanted to be extra careful, since I knew the project would be under scrutiny. We paid a lot of attention to set details, for example. Our Milada stands behind the same stand where the actual Milada stood 67 years ago, during the trial. We went to great lengths to re-create the surroundings, the rooms, the courthouse, etc.

Milada is your screenwriting, producing, and directing debut. Did you originally try to find someone to share these roles with?

Yes, when I first started working on it, I wanted to just be producer. I hired a U.S. writer, well known, but it didn't work out with her, then another one who also didn't work out. I spent a lot of money on a script that was unproduceable. Maybe it was my lack of experience, but I had to rewrite it myself. So I thought, OK, I'll write the script, give it to someone else to polish up, and then I'll find a director. I approached a lot of directors, but the more famous they are, the more money you need, and I wasn't able to raise the funds. Finally, about three years ago, I realized I had to do it myself. I had studied directing,



David Mrnka was born in 1978, in Hradec Králové. He left Czechoslovakia for Australia, where he studied economics and film at the SAE Institute Australia and the Actors Center in Sydney. In 2003 he began working on EXTRA, a show about show business, as a senior producer for Asia and Australia. In 2005 he moved to Los Angeles. He currently collaborates with CNN, BBC, Larry King Live, World Report, and others.

producing, and screenwriting in Australia, so I figured I would surround myself with the best crew ever and make it myself, or else I have to give up. So I ended up doing all three, which I don't think is ever ideal. I wouldn't recommend it to anyone.

But it worked, finally?

Yes, because I surrounded myself with such a great crew. I can't tell you what an amazing experience it was. The D.O.P., the producers, the line producer, the editor—I was really lucky. I've shot behind the scenes on feature films around the world, from America to Japan, but I've never encountered so many talented people as in this country. I don't just say it because I'm Czech—I'm very critical of Czechs—but this really is one of the best places to make movies.

Do we see it in the film that you're critical toward Czechs? Do you show the people who remained silent when the Communist evil was steamrolling ahead?

Yes, I think this is part of the nation's conscience that we haven't come to terms with. We were all part of it. I think when you love something and you want to change it, you have to be critical of it. This country has to deal with its past. And we haven't done that. Not that I think my film alone will do that. I'm not that ambitious. But I do think

INTERVIEW

DAVID MRNKA



© Reprofoto 2media

Milada Horáková (1901–50) is an important symbol of the democratic resistance to the Communist regime in post-World War II Czechoslovakia. Before the war, she studied law and worked as a lawyer and member of Parliament. She spent most of World War II in Nazi prisons and concentration camps as a result of her political views and her work on behalf of the underground resistance. Following the Communist Party coup, in February 1948, Horáková was arrested, tortured, and accused (falsely) of treason. Throughout her trial, broadcast publicly via newsreels and radio, she remained courageous and decent. On June 27, 1950, she was hanged, the only woman victim of the 1950s show trials in Czechoslovakia.

Yes, I think this is part of the nation's conscience that we haven't come to terms with. We were all part of it.

we really need to rethink our past. Milada was sentenced to death by Nazis, but in the end, they weren't the ones who killed her. It was Czechs. Her own people. She did everything for her country, and this country and its people killed her. It's the worst thing you can imagine.

Your cast is international and *Milada* is filmed in English. How do you plan to attract a wide international audience to this story?

A lot of directors wanted to make a movie about Milada. Her daughter had all kinds of offers. But they all wanted to shoot in Czech. Except for me. I want to access as large an international audience as possible, because I think this

is a story that transcends borders. And that's why Jana Kánská agreed to it. I made sure before I made the movie that I would have international distribution. That's thanks to Netflix, which will distribute *Milada* worldwide at the end of this year. It'll be accessible to hundreds of millions of households. That's what I wanted.

When did Netflix step in? VOD vs. cinema distribution is a huge issue nowadays.

They came in during the script stage. Before we started shooting. Their model is day-and-date release. Broadcasting will start the same day as Netflix puts the movie into cinemas. A lot of movie advocates are against it, because they feel it's going to destroy theater-going audiences. But Netflix believes people will choose whichever platform they prefer, whether it's TV, Netflix, or the cinema. A lot of big companies in the U.S., where I live, like Paramount or Sony, are pushing cinemas to shorten the window for movies to be released in cinemas before they go to VOD platforms. Right now it's 60 days, and they're trying to shorten it to 30, or release the films on all the platforms at the same time. Netflix did it first and now almost everyone wants to do it, but cinemas are opposed. For *Milada* we have some territories we retained for ourselves, so we'll distribute it ourselves in those places, including the Czech Republic of course. Then later it'll go worldwide with Netflix.

The role of Milada is played by Ayelet Zurer, an Israeli actress with a Hollywood career: *Munich*, *Daredevil*, *Man of Steel*, *Angels and Demons*. Did you choose her because of her previous work?

I picked her for a combination of reasons. When I met up with her, we talked about the story, and I didn't know it yet at the time, but her mother is from Slovakia, so she's half Czechoslovakian. She's also very sensitive and was able to understand the story in greater detail than other actresses I was met over the years. She's a great actress and has been in some big movies, but the Israeli movies and TV series she shot also mattered to me. Plus she looks like Milada. She's almost an exact copy! That's not always necessary, but it does help viewers, especially Czech viewers, who know what she looked like. I think they would be very critical if the person looked completely different.

What was the budget and how tough were the financial limits for you?

I can't talk numbers, but the budget was pretty restricted. Especially considering it was a period drama. We shot in the Czech Republic, which used to be pretty cheap, but we had to block off a lot of parts of Prague, which ended up being expensive. With the costumes too. But I still think we did pretty well. /

Film Friendly Liberec



Ron Howard Sings Its Praises

Brecht

There are currently nine regional film offices in the Czech Republic, all of them established with the assistance of the Czech Film Commission. One of the most active is the Liberec office, which is proving how important it is for filmmakers to cooperate with people who know the region. It was this approach that led the Liberec Film Office to be honored with the “Film Friendly” award last year.

“Each year, in cooperation with the Audiovisual Producers’ Association, the CzechTourism agency, and location managers, we acknowledge one regional office. The decision is always a difficult one, but it goes to the office that handles their mission most efficiently: actively communicating with filmmakers, connecting them with local service providers and governmental agencies, and maintaining contact with local residents and communicating the benefits of audiovisual production for their areas,” says Nela Cajthamlová of

the Czech Film Commission, which as of this year is part of the Czech Film Fund.

Liberec, a north Bohemian city about an hour’s drive from Prague, has a colorful history, with the former German population having left a strong mark on the local architecture. In the 19th century, there were some 50 textile factories here, as well as the RAF automobile plant. This period gave rise to the sumptuous mansions of industrialists, monumental religious structures, and urban development, all surrounded by romantic natural environs.

Albert Einstein and Milada Horáková

The local film office has been in operation since 2015 as part of the municipal government, working with film crews from not only the Czech Republic, but also the US, China, and Germany. Scenes from *Genius*, the National Geographic series about Albert Einstein, were shot in Liberec. Pavlína Sacherová, head of the Liberec Film Office, describes how it played out: “We set up quick and effective communications for them in every direction — with the municipal authorities and institutions, the public, and reporters. Most of the episodes were shot here, with a lot of technical scouting in advance, so it was important to harmonize the city’s normal operations with the shooting schedule. We also helped get permits for all the complex street closures and public transport detours.”

She adds, “It was also our job to communicate with the public, to avoid any complications. We also kept a strict eye on the urban shoots, to keep

FILM COMMISSION

REGIONAL FILM OFFICES

interference with the residents to a minimum. All in all, working with the filmmakers involved a lot of tasks, large and small, that bore fruit in the end. When director and producer Ron Howard met the city mayor, he praised Liberec, saying it could be compared to major film offices abroad.”



Working with filmmakers is not the only domain of the film office, though. Equally important is the office’s role as go-between with local residents. In Liberec, for example, they organize popular film tours of City Hall, and provide information on any obstructions if film crews are working or parking in public areas. The office also stays in touch with several Liberec groups that work with disabled people, informing them in advance of any closures or changes in public transport.

The success of the Liberec Film Office is also evident in its public image. Sacherová explains how important this is to her office’s activities: “It’s not only about the media giving locals the hottest news on the stars filming here. Feedback is extremely important to us. When people read that filmmakers had a good experience shooting here and liked our region, that it left a good taste in their mouths and they’d like to return, you tell me, is there anything nicer you could hear?”

Sacherová says it’s easy to explain why filmmakers work so well in Liberec: a film friendly mayor, a flexible municipal government, and obliging inhabitants.

Last year, the office also assisted in shooting for the biographical film *Milada* about Milada Horáková, a Czech member of Parliament sentenced to death during the Communist show trials of the 1950s. The filmmakers selected a ceremonial hall and corridors of the Liberec City Hall for the film.

“It wasn’t a large scale shoot, but we had a hard time finding available dates,” Sacherová says. “At that point, the winter shoot for *Genius* was in full swing, and they were using the ceremonial hall as Albert Einstein’s lecture hall. What’s more, the filming coincided with the Christmas holidays, so there were also

Advent concerts in the hall. But the film was very important to us, so we found a way to work it out, and the ceremonial hall appears in the film as the room in Parliament where Milada Horáková delivers her speech.”

A Theater for Bertolt Brecht

Recently, the film office worked with a TV docudrama on Bertolt Brecht for the German station ARD. The F. X. Šalda Theater in Liberec was the only one to meet the production’s demanding historical criteria, and plays the part of no less than five different theaters in the film. The icing on the cake was shooting the exterior winter scenes in a sweltering July and closing down a busy intersection in the city center, which made preparations truly intense.



Czech Film Fund

Get the support for the minority coproduction and use the production incentives.

The total budget per year is:

1.5 million euros for minority co-productions

31 million euros for tax rebates



Spoor by Agnieszka Holland, PL/DE/CZ/SE/SK
Berlinale 2017 – Competition

L♥VES



Out by György Kristóf, SK/HU/CZ,
IFF Cannes 2017 – Un Certain Regard



Nina by Juraj Lehotsky,
SK/CZ, Toronto IFF 2017

World Cinema!

The next minority co-production call opens in December 2017.

For more information, please contact **Czech Film Center.**

www.filmcenter.cz

www.fondkinematografie.cz

**czech
film
fund**

IN PRODUCTION

TOMAN

Toman:

The Story of a Ruthless Communist

© Total HelpArt, T.H.A.

by Hedvika Petrželková

Seven years since his last film, *Identity Card*, producer and director Ondřej Trojan has a new project. This time, the story revolves around Communist Zdeněk Toman, a controversial figure in modern Czech history.



Cozy Dens in 1999, a cult hit in the Czech Republic. Trojan also produced Hřebejk's *Divided We Fall*, nominated for an Oscar in 2001, and worldwide successful animated film *Oddsockeaters* (directed by Galina Miklínová).

Now, Trojan is in the midst of shooting his fourth feature film, a post-World War II historical drama titled simply *Toman*, after its main character. Zdeněk Toman (b. 1909) served as head of the Foreign Intelligence Service, where he heavily shaped political developments from 1945 to 1948 — including the Czechoslovak Communist Party's ascension to power in the coup of February 25, 1948.

The first part of shooting took place this spring, with the remainder planned for the fall. "I find it fascinating to deal with this historical period, which has fundamentally influenced our lives to this day," Trojan says. "Many successors of the hardliners continued to work both secretly and publicly until 1989, and many of them, unfortunately, are still there to this day. It's sad to see the methods they adopted from their predecessors still being practiced in our politics today."

Ondřej Trojan has directed several TV movies and three feature films, including *Želary*, a romantic drama set in the 1940s, nominated for an Oscar as Best Foreign Film in 2004.

As a producer, Trojan has worked on most of the films directed by Jan Hřebejk, a partnership that dates back to

The cinematographer is Tomáš Sysel, and the script, based on an original story by Frank Reiss, was written by Trojan together with Zdeňka Šimandlová. *Toman* is produced by Total HelpArt (T.H.A.) and the Slovak production company PubRes, co-produced by Czech Television and Radio and Television of Slovakia. The project is supported by the Czech Film Fund and the Slovak Audiovisual Fund.

Conveying History to the Younger Generations

Historical events have also figured prominently in Trojan's prior films. *Želary* takes place in the 1940s, during the Second World War, while *Identity Card*, a bitter comedy about adolescence, is set in 1970s communist Czechoslovakia. Yet more than a simple historical drama, *Toman* is an attempt at a precise historical reconstruction.

"I don't want to make a fake story set against the backdrop of historical facts. *Toman* will be as faithful as possible to the events that occurred, based on archival documentation and eyewitness testimony," Trojan says. "My aim, as with my previous films set in historical periods, is to convey history to my sons. I always try to shoot movies for a young audience. I want them to be able to experience history and understand its meaning for the present."

The film's main character is an unsavory politician and a dubious entrepreneur, but also the savior of hundreds of Jews. Zdeněk Toman was born Zoltán Goldberger in 1909, in Sobrance, Slovakia, the son of Hungarian Jews. The film portrays him as an unscrupulous careerist who worked his way up from low-level bureaucrat to head of Foreign Intelligence. In this position, he didn't hesitate to blackmail, intimidate, and levy false accusations in order to "purge" intelligence of its democratic components and strengthen the Communist presence in the bureau. He also exploited his diplomatic passport and international contacts to fraudulently raise money for Communist Party electoral campaigns. Finally, there was his third role as savior of the Jews, in which he or-



© Total HelpArt, T.H.A.

ganized the departure of East European Jews and refugees who survived the Holocaust through Czechoslovakia to Palestine, then supplied them with arms. However, his help was never selfless. He charged high commissions to Jewish organizations, in the process amassing tremendous wealth.

After the war, he was the first high-ranking Communist leader imprisoned for knowing too much. The Communist Party's fears that he would disclose their secrets were so great that they chose to let him escape jail in the summer of 1948 and make his way to the US zone in Germany. Eventually, Toman settled in Venezuela. He never returned to Czechoslovakia, and died in 1997.

Trojan is confident that it isn't only Czechs who will be interested in the story, but also foreign viewers. "The film deals not only with the Jewish question, but also with events that took place in Europe between 1945 and 1948, as well as America's failure and naïveté, which led them to believe something like the February coup couldn't happen. It seems mankind is unable to learn from history, with the same mistakes repeated over and over, until eventually the great civilizations collapse. It's important for me to depict the confidants and unprincipled people who can be easily manipulated and led by strings like puppets.

Explaining the financing, Trojan says, "We started filming once we had about 70 percent of the money. Now it's 80 percent, and I'm confident that we'll cover the remaining 20." He adds that the project has a budget of 1,340,000 euros. The Czech Film Fund supported the project in 2015 to the tune of 350,000 euros. "We've already arranged for minimum guarantees with the distributors, and we'll also support the project from our company's own resources, as we did with my previous films," Trojan says.

Toman is slated to premiere in April 2018. /



© Total HelpArt, T.H.A.



© HBO Europe

Jan Hřebejk: Every Genre Has Its Rules

by Hedvika Petrželková

The second season of the successful show *Head Over Heels* premieres on the Czech version of HBO Europe this coming October. The first season (2014) was based on *Shall We Kiss* (2007), an original Israeli TV series. Now the Czech production team has decided to take the show further, and in their own direction. The show's director is Jan Hřebejk (*The Teacher, Divided We Fall*), with Tereza Polachová (*Burning Bush, Wasteland*) as creative producer. "The sequel is a fully independent production," says Hřebejk.

Was it decided to renew the show for a second season while the first one was still in the making?

Definitely not. After all, *Shall We Kiss*, the original Israeli show, only ran for one season.

So now the show has turned into an original Czech production?

In a way, yes. Obviously, we continue where we left off in the first season,

which was loosely based on the Israeli original. But actually, we deviated from the original already in the first season, to a certain extent, especially in the show's genre and character development. The terms of the license were fairly benevolent, and authors in other countries took advantage of that, sort of like we did. In both the Hungarian and Romanian versions, which I had the chance to watch, the original genre shifted somewhat. The Hungarians

turned the show into a realist drama, focusing on the lesbian theme as a fairly innovative concept, whereas the Israeli original was pure melodrama. As for us, we veered off in a completely different direction. Our version is a social comedy, and a lot of its irony only emerged during the actual shooting — it was never in the script. We also aged our cast a little. In the original, the female protagonist is a 25-year-old woman, and I wanted Aña Geislerová (born in 1976) for the part.

I cast Aňa and Jirka (theater actor and improvisation artist Jiří Havelka) because I was convinced those two could steer the show toward a relationship sitcom — which is a slightly different approach compared to the original.

Was that the plan when the script was being written?

No, I only joined the production once the script had already been finished. But there's always room for interpretation. It was Aňa and I who decided to bring the self-deprecating aspect to Šárka's character in the first season; that wasn't part of the script. We also changed the part of Šárka's lover, played by Hynek Čermák, and made him into a sort of boorish macho man. Thankfully, there were no objections to our taking a more comedic approach. In any case, the sequel is a fully independent production.

The first season was shot in sunny Prague, whereas the second takes place during winter — partly in Prague and partly in the mountains. Why the change in setting?

I liked the idea of a winter setting. I didn't realize until later that it might present some difficulties. The first season was visually lovely, sort of a travel guide through beautiful Prague locations. Unfortunately, Prague in winter is not nearly as stunning, especially if there's no snow. Luckily for us, it was snowing just as we were about to start shooting. There was yet another complication, though. In the meantime, two other TV shows had

been made that were set on a river. I didn't want it to look like I was jumping on the bandwagon, so the scenes that were originally supposed to take place on a houseboat were shot on an industrial ship instead. For the second part of the story, the setting moves to the mountains.

Was there any other reason for the winter setting?

These relationship-based shows nearly always revolve around some kind of ritual. We realized — me, the producer and the screenwriters, Iva Klestilová and Tereza Dusová — that wintertime was actually packed with rituals: St. Martin's Day, Saint Nicholas Day, Christmas, New Year's Eve and the hangover the day after. Fertile ground for all sorts of family and relationship mishaps.

How do you make the show interesting for both new viewers and those who have seen the first season?

In a format like this, the key thing is to avoid oversimplifying. Some repetitiveness is inevitable, but you have to be light-handed about it, so the viewers already familiar with the show's themes won't get bored. The situations have to be believable, but still with the right amount of hyperbole. We have a few bizarre situations revolving around the couple played by Radek Holub and Anna Polívková, who struggle with a chronic lack of sex. But even if the scenes are highly stylized and exaggerated, they still have to show problems people are familiar with, or they wouldn't find them funny.



Director Jan Hřebejk

Who has the say in the final cut, and the definitive version of the show: you, or HBO?

The contract says it's HBO, but I believe there has to be mutual agreement. Luckily, we usually manage that. In the first season, we had some disagreements as to how explicit the sex scenes could be. Sometimes the humor can be too specific. Everything has to go through an approval process abroad, and since the show is primarily a comedy, some people may be uncomfortable, for example, with the sexist and macho attitudes expressed by the character played by Hynek Čermák. He has a way of insulting his gay assistant that I personally find funny, but some people may feel it's too much.

Your latest film, *The Teacher*, is currently enjoying major international acclaim, being picked up by one film festival after another. Were you expecting such a success?

It makes me very happy. Not only has it been picked up by film festivals, it's also been sold to several territories. Obviously, you can never really expect it. I suppose the theme somehow resonates with audiences. The story is very tight and focused. We shot the film in Slovakia over the course of just 19 days. None of the crew took even a day off, so we were a very close-knit group. Sometimes, the chemistry just clicks, and the film turns out to be both enjoyable and meaningful. But it's not something you can plan. You may feel like you're making something very ambitious, but in the end it doesn't work out. And then you make a movie with virtually no pretensions, and it surpasses all your expectations. /



Creative Europe – MEDIA in the Czech Republic 15 Years of Support for Filmmakers

by Daniela Staníková, Hedvika Petrželková

In 2002, the Czech Republic entered the Creative Europe – MEDIA program. What has it brought Czech cinematography, how has it influenced it, and what does it mean for the future? Answering these questions is Daniela Staníková, head of MEDIA office in the Czech Republic.

“All told, we can say the Czech Republic’s participation has been a success. It has been of clear benefit to Czech cinematography,” Staníková begins. “Both in terms of hard data and in terms of the significance of the program to Czech audiovisual production overall.”

Audiences, producers, and the media tend to be most interested in fiction films. How would you assess the support in that area?

Support for the development of new films is definitely more visible. The success rate here is still slightly above the European average. Over the course of the program’s existence, we have received 5,944,737 euros of support in this area, thanks to which 56 fiction,

animated, and documentary films have been finished. A lot of them have been presented at international film festivals and won major awards. Some recent examples include *Ice Mother*, which screened at the Tribeca festival in New York and took home the prize for best screenplay, and *Family Film*, which not only won several Czech Film Critics’ Awards, but also the Best Artistic Contribution Award in Tokyo and screened at the San Sebastian IFF.

What’s the situation with the distribution of foreign fiction films in the Czech Republic?

The Creative Europe – MEDIA program is involved with virtually every European film released in Czech cinemas. And our distributors pay it back. They enjoy the

good reputation of those who do truly good work. That goes for cinemas and festivals alike. Even amid heavy competition, four significant festivals maintain their support: the One World Festival of international human rights films, the Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival, the Anifilm International Festival of Animated Films, and Prague’s Febiofest. Our country also has a good number of educational programs for its size: MIDPOINT TV Launch, Ex Oriente Film, DOK.incubator. Like other smaller countries, though, there’s still much to be desired in terms of support for the development and production of TV programs.

The program actually offers comprehensive support for



filmmakers throughout the entire production process, all the way to distribution, is that correct?

Yes. For example, the producer of a documentary film can get support for the development of their film through the MEDIA Development program, then participate in one of a number of workshops that MEDIA supports during production – like the Czech-based Ex Oriente Film, which I mentioned, or, say, Eurodoc. For additional financing, they can then present the film at international pitching forums, like the East European Forum or IDFA Forum. The finished film is then screened at festivals, a number of which also receive support from the program – like IDFA, DOK Leipzig, and CPH:DOX, in addition to the domestic festivals I already mentioned. Support is also possible for cinema distribution. We could name analogous opportunities for fiction or animated films.

What impact has the program had on the Czech audiovisual industry and its development, particularly in terms of this comprehensive approach?

A very significant one, of course. When the country entered the program, Czech cinematography had already been independent of centralized state authority for more than 10 years, but film development as we know it today still didn't exist. I remember when we were translating the first materials into Czech, we and the producers had a hard time finding a Czech equivalent for the word "development." Most people saw professional development as unnecessary – they had difficulty even imagining it. State financing for cinematography was still dismal, so the MEDIA program came as welcome aid, even in terms of financing.

Thanks to the MEDIA Training programs and the scholarships that MEDIA initially offered professionals from new countries, dozens of filmmakers were able to participate in educational programs that made it much easier for them to find new partners and get their bearings on the European audiovisual market. A new generation of producers has emerged in this country, for whom thinking internationally is a given.

Which of the Creative Europe – MEDIA office's projects in the Czech Republic do you find the most interesting?

Our main role has always been to inform applicants of the opportunities that the MEDIA program offers, and then to help them prepare applications and projects so they can be as successful as possible. In the last few years, however, our scope has increased considerably. Thanks to the association of the Culture and MEDIA programs, cooperation between the two offices has expanded, and we're handling a number of new projects. One of the most interesting events that we've organized together to great acclaim is 'Střed zájmu:

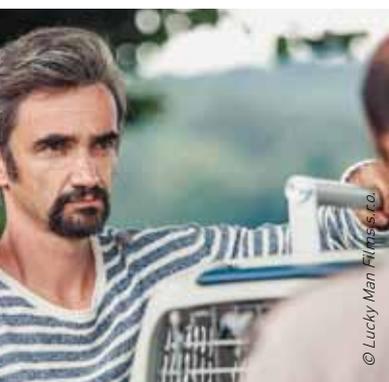
Publikum' (Focus on: Audiences). This is where, each year, the most interesting projects for working with audiences are presented, not only in the film industry, but in other cultural and creative fields as well: theater, classical music, libraries, museums. We also help promote the MEDIA program and European film among audiences. This spring we worked on promoting the EU Film Contest, where contestants who had been successful in European film quizzes could attend the Cannes Film Festival. We're glad that one of the winners was from the Czech Republic.

And what about events for film professionals?

This year we are dealing with Czech animation, the state of which is bleak in a lot of ways. We sponsored publication of the first-ever study of animation in the Czech Republic, which was done by the Association of Animated Film and tied in to other events, such as a meeting of professionals and presentations in Czech parliament. I hope that discussion will continue on the state of animation in our country. The theme of animation will culminate with the CEE Animation Workshop, which came about in cooperation with Creative Europe Desks – MEDIA from 18 Central and East European countries and the Visegrad Animation Forum. It will take place in December of 2017 in Ljubljana at the Animateka festival, and the aim will be to combine education and networking to strengthen our producers' capacities for coproduction, cooperation, and protecting their interests internationally.

What are you planning for the future?

The MEDIA program has a difficult time ahead as it negotiates a new structure and operations for the next period, which begins in 2020. A lot of new things are already up and running, though. The program has been joined by the Czech Komerční banka, which is going to provide guarantees on loans for entities working in the cultural and creative fields. The MEDIA program has also just started supporting production itself, though only in a marginal way. Within the scope of interdisciplinary financing, there is also a call for applications for the creation of interdisciplinary modules for master's studies in artistic and technological fields. /



René



Alois Nebel



FILMS TO COME



Films to come

Selected new Czech feature films in development, production, post-production or ready for release.

For more information please contact us at info@filmcenter.cz.

IN DEVELOPMENT

A Good Wife: Of Marie and Viktorka

This psychological drama takes place in a small Czech village at the beginning of 19th century. It tells a story of two sisters: the passionate, sensual Viktorka, and the religious, self-conscious Marie. Marie lives in the shadow of Viktorka, whom she loves, admires and yet is envious about her beauty and independence.

FICTION

original title: Dobrá hodina:

O Marii a Viktorce

runtime: 100 min

estimated release: August 2020

director: Zuzana Špidlová

produced by: Pavla Janoušková
Kubečková – nutprodukce (CZ)

Charlatan

An extraordinary man, blessed with exceptional abilities, wrestles with his own existential demons as well as a totalitarian state, as he provides mysterious healing to the residents of 1950s Czechoslovakia.

FICTION

original title: Šarlatán

runtime: 100 min

estimated release: Spring 2019

director: Agnieszka Holland

produced by: Šárka Cimbalová,
Svatava Peschková – Marlene
Production (CZ)

in co-production with: 42film (DE),
F&ME (IRL), ITA agentúra (SK)

Ghost School

DEBUT

The story begins on the last day of summer break, when the kids are facing long ten months of a new school year. And none are as utterly unexcited about it as Marek and Tonda, two best friends who have to separate after spending together many years at one school. They each are now heading to a different high school and that's why they come up with a bizarre plan: They decide to get thrown out of their new schools so that they can return to the elementary school to be together again.

FICTION

original title: Škola duchů

runtime: 85 min

estimated release: June 2019

director: Jan Bártek

produced by: Pavel Berčík –
Evolution Films (CZ)

Images of Love

DEBUT

This is a story of a childless couple who are trapped inside images and ideas they have created about themselves. Hana and Petr have a great apartment, a dog, and together they run a mobile app development company. Facing a relationship crisis, they decide to open up their marriage. They are allowed to do whatever they please, on the condition of being honest with each other. They set out to erase societal norms, to attain individual and sexual liberation. Yet they hardly find any satisfaction. Love turns into hostility and self-destruction. They are tied only by hatred, their past, and countless selfies scattered across social media accounts – their make-believe self-presentation to the outside world. Only a drastic move could save them now. Will they be able to find what they're looking for?

FICTION

original title: Obrazy lásky

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: December
2019

director: Tomasz Winski

produced by: Radovan Šibrť,
Jakub Pinkava - Pink Productions
(CZ)

FILMS TO COME

IN DEVELOPMENT

The Pilot

Pavel has worked in Israel for a number of years as a chemist and witnessed several terrorist attacks in the country. After his return to the Czech Republic, he is approached by an old friend to help him film commercials and videos flying a drone. Pavel enjoys working with the drone, but he has realized that life around him is dissatisfying and full of compromises – there is a lot of tension and protests among the people, but none is able to take direct action or to see a bigger picture. So Pavel sets out to „do the right thing“. He goes straight to the top, choosing to eliminate Dick Cheney, the controversial American politician and businessman, on his upcoming visit to Prague. Being an ex-chemist, it is not too difficult for Pavel to build a home-made explosive. The question is – can he succeed?

FICTION

original title: Modelář

runtime: 100 min

estimated release: Autumn 2019

director: Petr Zelenka

produced by: Petr Zelenka, Martin Sehnal – 0,7km films (CZ)

in co-production with: Punkchart films (SK), Fabula (SI), Match and Sparks (PL)

Shadows Country

A young, good-looking city girl, Marie, marries into a small town of Schwarzwald in Vitorazsko. A little vain for a small town woman, she likes to dress up and make her own clothes. The town is by Austrian borders in an area, which was forcibly annexed by Czechoslovakia in 1920. Most of the Czech-speaking citizens chose German nationality at the beginning of the Second World War, mostly for economical reasons. While peaceful during the war, the area was swept by violence right after the war. A group of malicious neighbors force 14 of the wealthiest people from the town in front of the people's court and they are murdered. Marie and her two children have to cross the border into the woods, where they build a temporary shed of branches.

FICTION

original title: Krajina ve stínu

runtime: 120 min

estimated release: December 2018

director: Zdeněk Jiráský

produced by: Martin Růžička – Luminar Film (CZ)

in co-production with: Nepenthe Film (DK), Filmpark (SK)

Satanic Girls: Women on the Move

A situational retrospective road movie, which follows the stories of six women who emigrated from Czechoslovakia. Once members of the local Dixieland orchestra, the band transformed abroad into an all-female pop group, which came to be known under the provocative title Satanic Girls. From 1968, when the group decided to remain in exile, Satanic Girls appeared on Chilean, Argentinian, Mexican, and Swedish television, gave concerts in many European countries and recorded a long-playing record in Argentina. The film crew follows the aging, but musically still active pop divas, on a journey to the bygone era, dealing with topics of aging, selective memory – and their wild rock 'n' roll past.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Satanic Girls: Ženy na cestě

runtime: 78 min

estimated release: November 2018

director: Bohdan Bláhovec

produced by: Anna Herza Tydlitátová – Telekinesis (CZ)

The Sperminators

Two men, Jiří (CZ) and Ed (NL), on a procreation mission. The Sperminators are using their exceptional virility to help women in need, but is it the right way how to save humanity?

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Sperminátoři

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: February 2019

director: Eva Tomanová

produced by: Petra Oplatková, Artemio Benki – Artcam Films (CZ)

IN PRODUCTION



Kibera Stories

The film portrays people from the largest slum in Africa, who did not allow the harsh living conditions to knock them down, but have transformed their experience into meaningful activities that help the others. The main character is Don, a young photographer from Kibera, who is deeply dissatisfied with the way Kibera is seen by people living outside the slum – as a troubled place, which should vanish. His photos and the stories of the people he photographs are supposed to tell the world about the positive aspect of life in a slum, which most of us are not willing to see. Stories of the characters will take place against the backdrop of the 2017 Kenyan Presidential Elections, in a time, when the painful question of the future of Kibera is opened once again.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Příběhy z Kibery

runtime: 75 min

estimated release: May 2018

director: Martin Páv

produced by: Zuzana Kučerová, Jitka Kotrllová – Frame Films (CZ)



Miss Hanoi

Vietnamese girl Hien (14) was murdered 4 years ago by her classmates in a small border town with a strong Vietnamese community. Because the killers were minors, they were placed in a juvenile detention from where they were released after they reached the age of 18. Now, after their release, one of them is found dead. The other is on the run. At this moment, an experienced criminal investigator captain Kříž appears on the scene. A very stereotypical Czech man, he isn't eager to co-operate with a local Vietnamese policewoman Anh. She is also experiencing pressure from the locals who never quite accepted the fact that a Vietnamese girl can work for the police. Moreover, Kříž is very suspicious about her connection to the victim's family.

FICTION

original title: Miss Hanoi
runtime: 100 min
estimated release: November 2018
director: Zdeněk Viktora
cast: David Novotný, Ha Thanh Špetlíková, Chip Nguyen, Miroslav Hruška
produced by: Zdeněk Viktora – SCREENPLAY BY (CZ)
in co-production with: ATTACK film (SK), Beep (CZ), Spoon (CZ)



Old-Timers

In their twilight years, two former political prisoners set off across the country in a camper van to seek out and demonstrably kill a once-feared communist prosecutor from the 1950s, who was never officially sanctioned for his actions. The story is inspired by real events.

FICTION

original title: Staříci
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: May 2019
directors: Martin Dušek, Ondřej Provozník
produced by: Jiří Konečný – endorfilm (CZ)
in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ)



Toman

A historical drama about the controversial Zdeněk Toman, the head of the Czechoslovak Department of Foreign Intelligence Agency. This institution significantly influenced the political development in Czechoslovakia between 1945 and 1948, and contributed greatly to the takeover of political powers and the government by the Communist Party.

FICTION

original title: Toman
runtime: 118 min
estimated release: April 2018
director: Ondřej Trojan
cast: Jiří Macháček, Kateřina Winterová, Kristýna Boková, Stanislav Majer, Marek Taclík
produced by: Ondřej Trojan – Total HelpArt (CZ)
in co-production with: PubRes (SK)



When the War Comes

Peter drives a new white SUV, he has a nice girlfriend and recently graduated from high school. But his real life is elsewhere: his own militia called Slovenskí branci (Slovak recruits), with units all across Slovakia, is one of the largest independent military organizations in Eastern Europe. Three years ago Peter took a military course with the Cossacks in Russia. Today he inspires other teenagers who are hungry to defend their country with a gun and teaches them to be proud of their Slavic heritage. The war might come any day. And it is important to be ready.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Až přijde válka
runtime: 80 min
estimated release: November 2017
director: Jan Gebert
produced by: Radovan Šibrť, Jakub Pinkava – Pink Productions (CZ)
in co-production with: HBO Europe (CZ)

FILMS TO COME

IN POST-PRODUCTION

IN POST-PRODUCTION



DEBUT

Batalives

The film tells a story about people who keep living in their places. Matea, Shona, Bé, Henrik, and Věra live thousands of miles away from each other. Whereas twenty-year-old Shona has to survive on a few dollars a week in Indian Batanagar, Henrik leads his life in Western Europe with enough of everything, but without satisfying family relationships. The adolescent Matea cares only about living on her own and leaving the town that fascinates only her father and a few elders. Bé has to decide if he would stay in his native Brazilian Bataypora, or leave for the Czech Republic to follow his love. Věra from Zlín sacrificed her whole life to her work in a shoe factory, but the place has no future as the industry is fading away.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Batalives

runtime: 80 min

estimated release: October 2017

director: Karolina Zalabáková, Petr Babinec

cast: Věra Dudíková, Shona Ghari, Matea Gotaľ, Henri Janssen, Devanil dos Santos

produced by: Lukáš Gargulák – Cinebonbon (CZ) Michal Sikora – Lonely Production (CZ)

in co-production with: Tomas Bata University (CZ), Czech Television (CZ)



DEBUT

Into the Wind

Have you ever had a feeling that you can do anything, but it ties you down? The siblings Matthias (24) and Natalia (22) deal with this while on the run from all the expectations looking after a sailboat in Greece. Their imaginary ride on the wave of 'real freedom' is interrupted by the sailboat owner's son, John (25), who comes to Greece to make a documentary about the current refugee situation. From the first moment, he holds up a mirror to the couple. The situation worsens when John begins to have feelings for Natalia. Matthias defends his sister like a jealous lover raising John's suspicions about the nature of the relationship between the siblings. Tension among the love triangle culminates one night when reality punches them in their faces. Does it change their perception of freedom and responsibility?

FICTION

original title: Do větru

runtime: 75 min

estimated release: November 2017

director: Sofie Šustková

cast: Vladimír Polívka, Jenováfa Boková, Matyáš Řezníček

produced by: Lucie Gorovoj, Michal Nýdrle – CARTEL productions (CZ)

in co-production with: i/o post (CZ), BEEP (CZ)



Jiri Brdecka

The film celebrates the 100th anniversary of the birth of Jiří Brdečka, a filmmaker who is lodged in the public consciousness as the author of the immortal Czech comedies *Lemonade Joe*, *Dinner for Adele*, and *The Mysterious Castle in the Carpathians*. The documentary tells the story of Jiří Brdečka and his friends – people who confronted the horrors of history with creation, wit and beauty, rather than with calculations. That may be the reason why their work has survived despite their premature deaths. Such as that of Brdečka.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Jiří Brdečka

runtime: 75 min

estimated release: December 2017

director: Miroslav Janek

produced by: Ondřej Zima – Evolution Films (CZ)

in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ)



Nothing Like Before

The film is a stylized documentary view into the life of present day teenagers living on Czech-German border – a geographic and social periphery in the middle of Europe. It portrays daily lives of 3 youngsters, students at one particular high school, and witnesses their transformation into mature individuals. To what extent are they prisoners of their surrounding environment, family prototypes, and the educational system, and to what extent are they capable of becoming autonomous creators of their own fate? *Nothing Like Before* depicts two years in the life of the main characters, following them through a number of transformations, which prepare them – or perhaps not – for future adult life.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Nic jako dřív

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: January 2018

director: Lukáš Kokeš, Klára Tasovská

produced by: Pavla Kubečková Janoušková, Tomáš Hrubý – nutprodukce (CZ)

in co-production with: HBO Europe (CZ)



MINORITY CO-PRODUCTION

The Cellar

The marriage of Milan and Táňa Labát is going through a crisis. Discontent and vigorous Táňa considers her husband, who avoids resolving any problems, a coward. Their 16 years old daughter Lenka takes their alienation very hard. But one night during the summer holidays, their lives change. Milan leaves to play a concert with his band in a district town while Lenka is celebrating birthday with her friends in a nearby village. However, Lenka does not return home...

FICTION

original title: Pivnica

runtime: 110 min

estimated release: December 2017

director: Igor Voloshin

cast: Jean-Marc Barr, Olga Simonova, Milan Ondřík, Zuzana Vejvodová, Roman Skamene

produced by: Livia Filusová – Furia Film (SK)

in co-production with: Gate Film LLC (RU), Julietta Sichel – 8Heads Productions (CZ)



DEBUT

The Russian Job

Deep inside Russia on the mighty Volga river lies the largest factory in the country. It is the home of Lada, the legendary Soviet car. On the outside, the plant is still standing, but in reality it loses billions of rubles every year. In order to save it, the Russian government hires a Swedish supermanager and a handful of European industry experts to turn the situation around. They have a vision. They have an incredible drive to make changes. And there will be changes. Thousands will lose jobs. But it is the Soviet mentality that will be the hardest nut to crack. What happens if you wake the Russian bear?

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Švéd v žigulíku

runtime: 70 min

estimated release: January 2018

director: Petr Horký

produced by: Martin Jůza – Krutart (CZ)

in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ)

international sales: Rise and Shine World Sales



DEBUT

MINORITY CO-PRODUCTION

Touch Me Not

Laura works for years in the mannequin factory. She peeps at other people's intimate lives while hers doesn't seem to function. She pays to be touched, hiring young boys to create an illusion of intimacy. Tudor, an actor who earns his living as a masseur, wants a woman who rejects his attempts at making contact. Paul, also an actor, is caught in a dysfunctional relationship with an older man. One day Laura witnesses an interactive show by Tudor & Paul, which deeply touches her. She gradually becomes a silent witness of their lives, their solitary longing resonating with her own. In this mirroring process the walls, she so skillfully built around her, collapse under the flow of her repressed feelings.

FICTION

original title: Ne dotýkej se mě

runtime: 130 min

estimated release: January 2018

director: Adina Pintilie

cast: Laura Benson, Tomas Lemarquis, Dirk Lange, Hermann Mueller

produced by: Adina Pintilie, Bianca Oana – Manekino film (RO), Philippe Avril – Les Films de L'Étranger (FR)

in co-production with: rohfilm (DE), Radovan Šíbrt, Jakub Pinkava - Pink Productions (CZ), Agitprop (BG)



Winter Flies

The story begins at a police station with an interrogation of Mára, a teenager who is said to have stolen a car and driven it across the country, and continues with an account of what happened during the car trip.

FICTION

original title: tba

runtime: 85 min

estimated release: February 2018

director: Olmo Omerzu

cast: Tomáš Mrvík, Jan František Uher, Eliška Křenková, Lenka Vlasáková, Martin Pechlát

produced by: Jiří Konečný – endorfilm (CZ)

in co-production with: Cvinger film (SI), Koskino (PL), Punkchart films (SK), Rouge International (FR), Czech Television (CZ)

FILMS TO COME

NEW RELEASES

NEW RELEASES



8 Heads of Madness

Soviet Russia, 1921. The young poet Anna Barkova is to embark on a starry carrier, her first collection has just been published and she is believed to become the greatest Russian poet, overshadowing event the great Pushkin. A few years later, however, Anna sits in a crowded cattle truck heading for the barren steppes of Kazakhstan. This will not be her only journey and only camp. The poet Anna Barkova (1906–1976) spent 22 years of her life in gulags. She survived thanks to her poems, thanks to hope and passionate love for a woman named Valentina.

FICTION

original title: 8 hlav šílenství

runtime: 107 min

Czech release: 12 October, 2017

director: Marta Nováková

cast: Zuzana Fialová, Aneta Langerová, Marie Štípková, Pavel Zedníček

produced by: Marta Nováková, Václav Novák – MARFAFILM (CZ), Julieta Sichel – 8Heads Productions (CZ)

in co-production with: Heyday (SK), Czech Television (CZ), Moss & Roy (CZ), Michael Samuelson Lighting Prague (CZ), Q1 Film (CZ), Cineart TV Prague (CZ)



Ark of Lights and Shadows

They met on Friday, got married secretly on Sunday. They had to run away from home due to their parents' wrath, so they rather spent their honeymoon among the cannibals in the South Seas. They lost there their illusions, the camera, and almost their lives. At the moment when many people would have abandoned filming, Martin and Osa Johnson had started building their career, which fascinated Charlie Chaplin, Ernst Hemingway, or the British Royal family. The story of Martin and Osa is the story of the birth of cinematic wildlife, and of disappearance of its archetype. It is an authentic footprint of an era when filming itself was more dangerous than lions or malaria, when it meant to risk, at best failure, at worst your own life.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Archa světla a stínů

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: November 2017

director: Jan Svatoš

produced by: Ivana Buttry – Art Francesco (CZ)

in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ)



Barefoot

Eight-year-old Eda is a long-desired and anxiously protected child of parents who had lost one baby before. Eda is therefore a backup child; he even has the same name. After his father rejects to affiliate with Nazi invaders of Czechoslovakia in 1939, the family is forced to leave Prague and spend the war time living with relatives in the countryside. The war provides the mysterious adventures to Eda whose childish eyes cannot perceive the danger of those difficult times. To him life feels strange but beautiful now – a city boy lives in a tiny town, joins local boyish crew to spend days walking barefoot, notices beauty of girls for the first time and discovers both, deep family secrets, and his own bravery.

FICTION

original title: Po strništi bos

runtime: 111 min

Czech release: 17 August, 2017

director: Jan Svěrák

cast: Tereza Voříšková, Ondřej Vetchý, Oldřich Kaiser, Jan Tříska

produced by: Jan Svěrák – Biograf Jan Svěrák (CZ)

in co-production with: Phoenix Film (DK), Novinski (SK), Czech Television (CZ)

international sales: Portobello Film Sales



Following

The feature-length documentary *Following* maps the YouTubers' phenomenon in the Czech Republic and introduces its main protagonists, the authors of videos with millions of views. Today, we witness the transformation of classic audiovisual production into video content independent from budget restrictions and third parties. Parents don't understand what is going on with their own children sitting in front of computer or mobile screen all day long. Children, on the other hand, can't understand why their parents watch never-ending soap operas on the other screen -- the TV. *Following* unfolds the background of Youtuber's lives and tries to answer the question: What does it mean to be a Youtuber followed by millions?

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Nejsledovanější

runtime: 90 min

Czech release: 14 September, 2017

director: Jiří Sádlek

cast: Kovy, Pedro, Shopaholic Nicol, Gabrielle Hecl, A Cup of Style

produced by: Jindřich Trčka – Cofilm (CZ)



Garden Store: Deserter

Film trilogy *Garden Store* consists of three separate films taking place against the backdrop of the most dramatic periods of the last century. *Deserter* takes place in the years 1947–1953. The main character is the owner of the posh hair salon Valentino in the center of Prague, which is the purpose and the fulfillment of his life, and where he employs his entire family. It is the story of a man who risked his life fighting for freedom, survived his own death to once again face the loss of hope. *Deserter* is a tragicomic drama of harshly tested love between siblings and between parents and kids.

FICTION

original title: Zahradnictví: Dezertér
runtime: 100 min
Czech release: 28 September, 2017
director: Jan Hřebejk
cast: Anna Geislerová, Martin Finger, Klára Melíšková, Gabriela Míčová, Jiří Macháček
produced by: Viktor Tauš – Fog n' Desire Films (CZ)
in co-production with: MD4 (PL), Sokol Kollár (CZ), Czech Television (CZ)



Garden Store: Suitor

Film trilogy *Garden Store* consists of three separate films taking place against the backdrop of the most dramatic periods of the last century. It tells the story of three families: the family of an air radio operator, family of a hair salon owner and the family of a garden store owner. *Suitor* takes place in the late 1950s and tells the story of family relations scarred by war and the communist takeover. The tragicomic insight shows a generational conflict between the prewar and postwar generations. *Suitor* is a romantic comedy about parents' perceptions, how the fortune of their children should look like.

FICTION

original title: Zahradnictví: Nápadník
runtime: 100 min
Czech release: 16 November, 2017
director: Jan Hřebejk
cast: Anna Geislerová, Martin Finger, Klára Melíšková, Gabriela Míčová, Lenka Krobotová, David Novotný
produced by: Viktor Tauš – Fog n' Desire Films (CZ)
in co-production with: Sokol Kollár (SK), Czech Television (CZ)



Harvie and the Magic Museum

Harvie is a smart but a bit too lively boy with one ambition, to finish the last level of his computer game. Once in the Gamers Hall of Fame, his absent-minded father, Mr. Spejbl, would finally be proud of him. But finishing the game turns out to be only the start of a real adventure that takes Harvie, his dog Jerry, and his friend Monica deep into the forgotten realms of the city's old puppet museum. And as Harvie activates by accident a legendary magic disc, he brings the museum and all its puppets to life, but also its ancient and monstrous puppet master! Realizing what powers he has unleashed, Harvie will have to challenge his gaming skills to new levels and summon all his courage to fight the crazy puppet master and save not only his father but the entire city from a grim and wooden faith.

ANIMATION

original title: Hurvínek a kouzelné muzeum
runtime: 85 min
Czech release: 31 August, 2017
director: Inna Evlannikova, Martin Kotík
cast: Martin Klásek, Helena Štáchová, Ondřej Lázňovský, Petr Rychlý
produced by: Martin Kotík – Rolling Pictures (CZ)
in co-production with: GRID Animation (BE), KinoAtis (RU)



Laika

Life is not easy for Laika, a dog on the outskirts of a big Russian city. She is caught and forcibly retrained to become a pioneer in astronautics. Soon after her lift-off into space, a number of animals follow that are hurriedly launched from Houston and Baikonur. The animals travel astray, but finally manage, with the help of a black hole, to colonize a faraway planet. After a short period of harmonious, undisturbed co-existence with indigenous life forms, however, first human cosmonauts run ashore on their planet, and their harmonious life, indeed their very survival, are suddenly in jeopardy.

ANIMATION

original title: Lajka
runtime: 85 min
Czech release: 2 November, 2017
director: Aurel Klimt
cast: Helena Dvořáková, Petr Čtvrtníček, Jan Vondráček, Karel Zima
produced by: Aurel Klimt – Studio ZVON (CZ)
in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ), Bystrouška (CZ), UPP (CZ)

FILMS TO COME

NEW RELEASES



The Taste of Power

Vladimír Mečiar was the first Minister of Interior after the Velvet Revolution of 1989 and the three-time re-elected Prime Minister of Slovakia. Vladimír Mečiar was an undeniably charismatic politician “loved by the nation” and his profound influence on the contemporary political climate of Slovakia cannot be doubted. His final period in government 1994–1998, was marked by an authoritarian, almost autocratic rule, misuse of power in the biggest privatization cases and scandals, and unauthorized activities of the secret services. It was this governance which ruled Slovakia out of the process of being accepted in the EU and NATO at that time.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Mečiar

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: November 2017

director: Tereza Nvotová

produced by: Zuzana Mistríková, Ľubica Orechovská – PubRes (SK)

in co-production with: Kateřina Černá, Pavel Strnad – Negativ (CZ)



Milada

Set against the beautiful and complex landscapes of post-war Czechoslovakia, Milada Horáková's true story shook the world and triggered powerful and fervent responses from many nations and renowned individuals across the globe – Churchill, Einstein, and Eleanor Roosevelt, to name a few. Through her life, she moved amid some of the greatest minds of her time and inspired those who met her. *Milada* is both a political thriller and a compelling drama, combining elements of idealism, gentle humor, and tragedy. It's a character-driven film with epic themes and suspenseful plot.

FICTION

original title: Milada

runtime: 126 min

Czech release: 2 November, 2017

director: David Mrnka

cast: Ayelet Zurer, Robert Gant, Anna Geislerová

produced by: David Mrnka –

Loaded Vision Entertainment (CZ)



Mamma from Prison

Stories of the three women the film observes, start in the prison in Světlá nad Sázavou. Management of this women's prison has decided for an unusual social experiment – to create a specialized ward where mothers can start their imprisonment together with their children. The film starts with everyday prison life situations witnessing the way the three protagonists cope with the environment. It follows them from 2010, capturing their imprisonment, and continues through their preparations for leaving the prison, their release, and the way they handle life outside of prison. The film attempts to verify and expose if and how this prison concept works long term.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Máma z basy

runtime: 80 min

estimated release: October 2017

director: Veronika Jonášová

produced by: Pavla Janoušková Kubečková – nutprodukce (CZ)

in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ)



Quartette

Have you ever played in a band? It is like your second family, with all of its history and members who together strive for happiness and get through various experiences. Like a family which comes together in the evening around one table, in spite of everything good and bad, the members of this quartet of so called contemporary classical music get together at yet another concert. The somewhat incongruous foursome – led by Robert, who is heavily dependent on his mother; the attractive and chaotic cello player Simona; the young musician Tomáš, who likes to show off; and an ageing history expert, the withdrawn 'Funés' – experience many funny situations, as well as misunderstandings, on their way to find their most free composition.

FICTION

original title: Kvarteto

runtime: 95 min

Czech release: 30 November, 2017

director: Miroslav Krobot

cast: Barbora Poláková, Jaroslav Plesl, Zdeněk Julina, Lukáš Melník, Lenka Krobotová

produced by: Ondřej Zima – Evolution Films (CZ)

in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ), innogy (CZ), Soundsquare (CZ)

