

CZECH FILM

A man with grey hair and a beard, wearing a dark blue textured sweater, is shown in profile, looking off to the side. He is holding a small, light brown, fluffy animal, possibly a squirrel or a small dog, in his arms. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with some structures and lights.

Summer 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 State Cinematography Fund Czech Republic.



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Bohdan Sláma /

In his new film, *Ice Mother*, Bohdan Sláma, revisits the theme of family, this time with a little more humor and hope.



Out /

A debut road movie of Slovak director György Kristóf is going to compete at the 70th Cannes Film Festival in the Un Certain Regard section.



Barefoot /

Oscar-winning director Jan Svěrák (*Kolya*) is finishing up his latest feature, titled *Barefoot*.



Czech Film

Springboard /

The second edition of the industry initiative organized by Czech Film Center and Finále Plzeň.



New Czech Animation /

Animator Kateřina Karháňková's new project, *Fruits of Clouds*, was selected for the Short Films in Competition at Annecy.

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Each year, Cannes Film Festival is the center of hopes and wishes for film professionals from around the globe. From directors and producers to film institutions, many aspirations focus on the trophies handed out on the French Riviera.

In 2017, it is a great pleasure, once again, to see three films with Czech participation in the official program at Cannes.

Out, directed and written by György Kristóf, shot as a Slovak-Hungarian-Czech co-production, and *Dregs*, directed by Mohammad Rasoulof, an Iranian film with almost all of its post-production completed in the Czech Republic, will both compete in the *Un Certain Regard* section.

Co-production is also a key word for this year's Czech entry in Cinéfondation: *Atlantis*, by Slovak student Michal Blaško, with Prague's FAMU acting as co-producer with the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava.

This only goes to show that co-production is no longer an exclusive or rare occurrence in Czech cinema. Over the last four years, the number of minority co-productions has increased dramatically, and the film fund now receives a huge number of projects seeking to co-produce with the Czech Republic.

Congratulations to the films in the Cannes official program and to all the teams behind them!

Markéta Šantrochová



A Prominent Patient

A Prominent Patient won 12 Czech Lions

The film, which explores a personally difficult stage in the life of Czech diplomat and politician Jan Masaryk, directed by Julius Ševčík and produced by Rudolf Biermann, became an absolute winner of the 24th Czech Lion Awards, which were handed out on 4th March 2017.

Two awards went to *I, Olga Hepnarova* – for the Best Actress in a Leading Role (Michalina Olszańska) and the Best Actress in a Supporting Role (Klára Melišková). The Best Documentary is according to the Czech Film and TV Academy *Normal Autistic Film* by Miroslav Janek. In the student film category was awarded short film by Anna Lyubynetska *Kiev Moscow*.

Czech Cinema Now! at goEast

An extensive collection of Czech films was screened at goEast film festival in Wiesbaden, which ran 26 April – 2 May, 2017. The focus section called Czech Cinema Now! introduced a selection of recent Czech feature films and documentaries to the German audience. The section was organized in partnership with the Czech Film Center and the Institute of Documentary Film. Moreover, three films were selected for the main competition section: *The Teacher* (by Jan Hřebejk), *Filthy* (by Tereza Nvotová) and a documentary *Teaching War* (by Adéla Komrží).



Filthy

Czech Film



Documentary projects at worldwide doc markets

Two Czech documentary projects - *Kiruna 2.0* by Greta Stocklassa and *The Sound Is Innocent* by Johana Švarcová - attended the training programme EURODOC PRODUCTION. *Kiruna 2.0* also took part at the Docs in Progress of the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival (5 - 11 March) and received the Sound award by MuSou Music Group. Director Filip Remunda pitched his new documentary project *Polish God or Pepik the Czech Goes to Poland in a Quest for Love of God*, co-directed by Vít Klusák and produced by Vernes, Hypermarket Film, Plesnar & Kraus Films, Peter Kerekes and Czech Television, at the CPH:FORUM at CPH:DOX.



Czech Happy End in Dresden

Filmfest Dresden, which is dedicated to short films and this year took place 4 - 9 April chose Jan Saska's black and white grotesque *Happy End* for the main competition. Eleven other Czech shorts were presented in various sections, most of them in the special section Focus Czech Republic, for example the animated *Shadow Over Prague* by Marek Berger, *ZOO Story* by Veronika Zacharová or the recent winner of the Magnesia Prize for the Best Student Film awarded in the framework of the Czech Lion Awards - *Kiev Moscow* by Anna Lyubynetska.

Plague awarded at Sofia Meetings

The upcoming film *Plague* directed by Jan Těšitel and produced by Petra Oplatková and Artemio Benki (Sirena Film) was awarded at the 14th Sofia Meetings, which took place in March in the framework of the Sofia IFF. The project received the Mediterranean Film Institute scholarship to participate in MFI Script 2 Film Workshops. *Plague* is a story about 13-year-old Rosa, whose mother is the several months in a tuberculosis sanatorium in Alps. The mother is supposed to come back home but in the meantime, a plague epidemic breaks out. Rosa with her brothers, father, dog Tony and the housekeeper remains trapped in quarantine in a claustrophobic environment of their apartment.



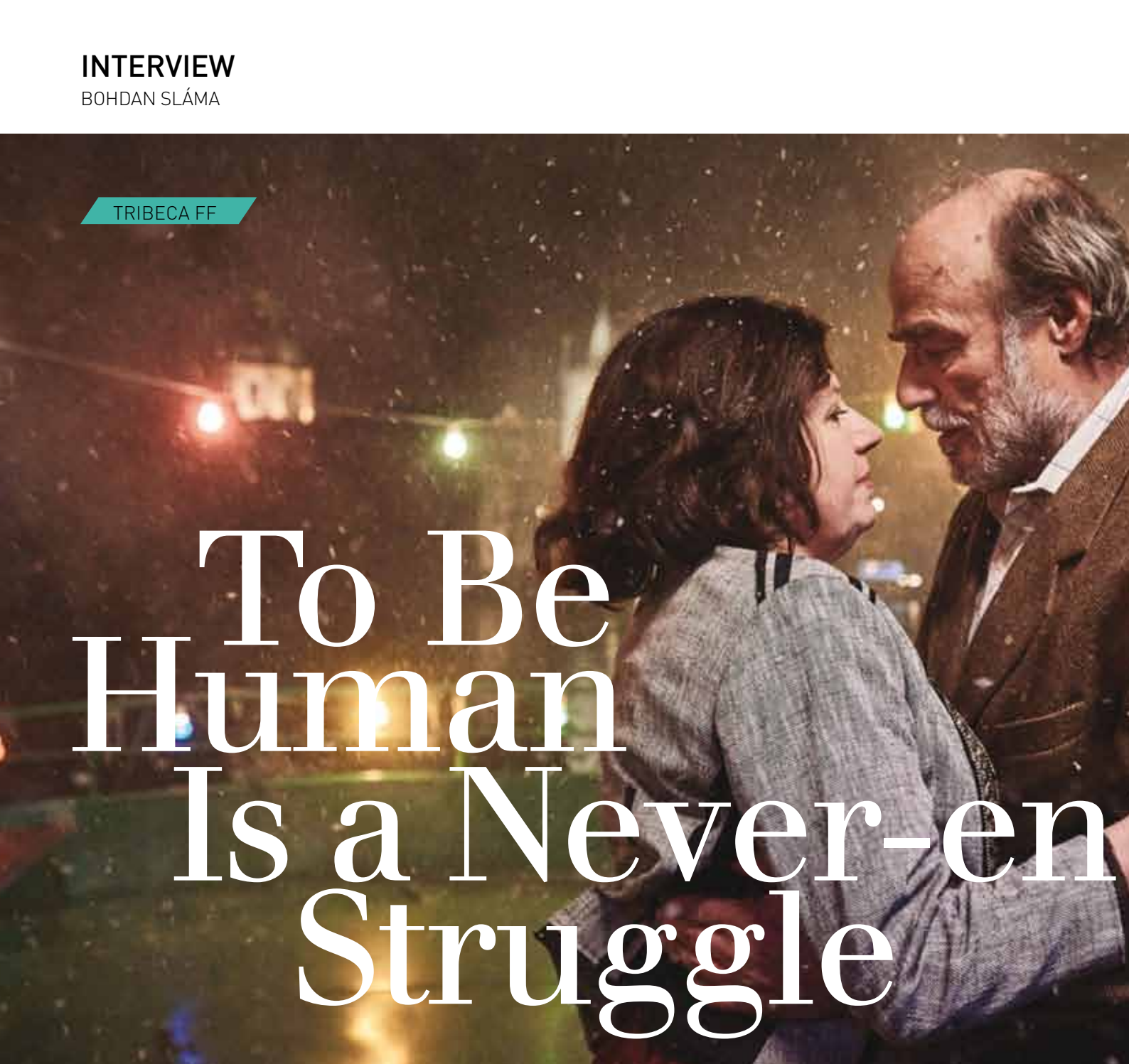
The Painted Bird's first shooting days

Harvey Keitel, Stellan Skarsgård and Udo Kier will join Václav Marhoul's international project *The Painted Bird*, an adaptation of a Holocaust novel by Jerzy Kosiński. The leading role has taken nine-year-old Czech actor Petr Kotlár. The first take was shot on 23 March and 105 shooting days are planned. *The Painted Bird* is Marhoul's third feature film after comedy *Smart Philip* (2003), and WWII drama *Tobruk* (2008), and it is produced by Marhoul's Silver Screen in partnership with Czech Television, co-produced by Eduard Kučera and Certicon on the Czech side. The Slovak coproducers are PubRes and Radio and Television of Slovakia, with Directory Films (Ukraine) and Film Produkcja (Poland). The project has received support from the State Cinematography Fund Czech Republic, Creative Europe - MEDIA, the Czech Ministry of Culture and the Ukrainian State Film Agency.



Now

TRIBECA FF

A man and a woman are shown in profile, looking at each other in a snowy, nighttime setting. The man is on the right, older with a beard, wearing a brown jacket. The woman is on the left, younger with dark hair, wearing a grey jacket. They are standing close together, and the background is dark with some blurred lights and falling snow.

To Be Human Is a Never-en Struggle

by Hedvika Petrželková

In his new film, *Ice Mother*, Bohdan Sláma, director of the psychological dramas *Wild Bees* and *Something Like Happiness*, revisits the theme of family, this time with a little more humor and hope.

Hana, the film's heroine, is a woman in her sixties, a dedicated mother and grandmother, who finds herself exploring an unusual community — winter swimmers — setting in motion a major shift in her life.

Why did you choose the community of winter swimmers as the setting for your film?

Whenever I make a movie, I like to explore a different group of people. Winter swimmers are an authentic



/ *“I see optimism in the fact that Hana is able to change.”*

none of that would work. To play the role she had to be able to do it herself. She resisted for a while, but finally, when she tried it, it turned out she was unbelievably well suited for it. She could stay in freezing cold water for twenty minutes, almost as long as the top champions.

You have a history of working not only with nonactors, but also with children—or one child in particular, who had a key role. What was that like, and how did you find Daniel Vízek?

For the role of the introverted child, I knew we had to pick someone who already had it in them. We looked at some young actors, through a casting agency, but to no avail. Finally we discovered Daniel through a TV audition that was open to kids without any acting experience. We tried him out in some of the harder scenes, and he convinced us that not only could he act, but he had something in him that his character needed to have. He could grasp even the relatively complex things that go on between adults. It was wonderful working with him. And with the hen, too.

Yes, the hen also plays an important role. What was it like working with an animal actress?

Unlike Zuzana Krónerová, the hen had a body double, so she only came on set to shoot the most demanding scenes. For the rest, we just used a regular hen. She's a big star, and normally does theatrical productions, so she's used to it.

community with their own laws, ethos, sense of humor. It also gave me access to a bunch of amazing nonactors. Plus a key factor for me is that all the rituals of our ancestors, whether Christian or pagan, are associated with cold water. Stepping into cold water has always meant exposing yourself to fear, it's a physical challenge. Then, when you come out of the water, there's a feeling of joy, it's a truly amazing thing. I see it as the contemporary form of an ancient ritual.

How did your leading lady handle the challenge?

Originally, she thought we were going to use some special effects or neoprene, or do it in post-production. But



INTERVIEW

BOHDAN SLÁMA

I think it would be fair to say that *Ice Mother*, compared to your previous films, is more accessible to a wider audience. There are no extreme characters, and in general it's got a very positive viewpoint. Was that intentional on your part, or did it just happen naturally?

I always want my movies to communicate with the audience. They may be more demanding, and they aren't for people who just go to the movies to be entertained, but my main theme is, and always has been, families, which is relevant to everyone. There's hardly anyone who doesn't have the experience of functioning in a family community, so in that sense this film is no different from my previous ones. I definitely didn't decide in advance that I was going to make this movie nicer or less extreme.

There's also a fair amount of hope—again, unlike your previous films.

I'm glad you see it that way. I think it's good that Hana finds a way to redefine her place in life—she frees herself from the role that she's assigned to herself all her life. I see optimism in the fact that she's able to change.

So would you agree that people can fight to better their lives even once they get older?

I fundamentally believe that to be human is a never-ending struggle with the bad that every human being has within them, and a constant effort to uplift the good. I like people who have the ability to keep on transforming

“She could stay in freezing cold water for twenty minutes, almost as long as the top champions.”



themselves. It's about continually learning, because people who feel like nothing about them is ever going to change, who live trapped in stereotyped notions of themselves, people like that aren't interesting to me as characters from the perspective of telling a story on film.

What made you choose a woman for the lead role?

Motherhood here in this country tends to be presented as the mom who sacrifices herself for the sake of the family and carries around her children as a burden all her life, so I was interested in exploring a character who no one expects anything from. I naturally identify with the victim in any story, but what I like even more is when a character can escape from that role. Plus Zuzana has an ability that's rare in women of her age: She can play the clown.

Who do you use as your first viewer, or the first reader of your scripts?

The first people I give my script to read are my wife and my producers. They're the first ones I talk it over with. After that, I try to give it to different people I respect — my co-workers, even my students at school — to get feedback. The genesis of this script was relatively long. From the original idea to the final version took two years of work and eight drafts. It was exhausting, but I had a great script advisor in Martin Daniel, the son of Frank Daniel, who works in both US and European film, so his comments were extremely valuable.

What's your opinion about the current state of Czech film?

We still don't have any works that would bowl people over, either in Europe or worldwide. The main weakness of Czech film is it's made with the mindset that it's only



Bohdan Sláma

(b. 1967) debuted with *Wild Bees* (2001), which earned many honors, including a Tiger Award at the International Film Festival Rotterdam. His second film, *Something Like Happiness* (2005), won seven Czech Lions and the top prize at the San Sebastian film festival. His other works, *The Country Teacher* (2008) and *Four Suns* (2012), have screened in film festivals around the world. Having completed his last project, *Ice Mother* (2017), he is currently working on *Švejk*, a film inspired by the classic 1920s novel by Jaroslav Hašek *The Good Soldier Švejk*.

for a Czech audience. There are a lot of films being made about periods of history that haven't been dealt with before, or addressing historical taboos, but these things aren't interesting to the rest of the world. Meanwhile we also don't have the kind of social traumas that can serve as a source of powerful stories just by describing what happened, like in Romania, with films like *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu*. Plus, even when we do find powerful themes, we don't manage to convey them in a comprehensible way. When it comes to this, our documentaries are much more interesting. The ideal for me is what you see in every Miloš Forman's film: All of his movies deal with extremely complex, deep subjects that are uncomfortable, but he knows how to present them in a way that appeals to a wider audience.

You're working on a major new project now: *Švejk*, based on the famous Jaroslav Hašek's novel from the 1920s. How is that going?

We're doing run-throughs with the actors now, which will also let me see if the material is viable material and the characters are interesting, or whether I'm just fooling myself. Hašek's *Švejk* is a fascinating work of literature, but adapting it for the screen is extremely challenging.

How do you picture Švejk himself?

There are so many different angles you can take to look at *Švejk*. From a fool and a monster to the incarnation of Hašek's tremendous wit and wisdom. I'm trying to see him as a realistic figure, a man who deals with the horrors of the world around him through humor, which is oftentimes extremely dark. That's his way of combating it, and it's timeless, which is what makes the character real. /



Director Bohdan Sláma with the actress Zuzana Krónerová

“... Zuzana has an ability that's rare in women of her age: She can play the clown.”

PROFILE
OUT

Out

UN CERTAIN REGARD

Modern Journey to Bizarre Ends

by Hedvika Petrželková, Markéta Šantrochová

Out, a road movie by Slovak first-time director György Kristóf, a student at Prague's FAMU, will compete in Un Certain Regard at the 70th running of Cannes.

Written and directed by Kristóf, *Out* tells the story of Ágoston, a 50-year-old family man who sets out on a journey through Eastern Europe in desperate search of a job and with the hope of fulfilling his dream: to catch a big fish. As he finds himself in the Baltic, alone and empty-handed, his journey takes him ever deeper into a sea of bizarre events and encounters.

Finding Your Place in the World

In the early part of the film, we see the hero in the intimate setting of his home, but then, gradually, we move to increasingly empty and desolate spaces, devoid of humanity. Asked whether his aim was to portray the main character as a modern pilgrim, gaining distance

yet losing himself in the process, the director replies: "That is the question of the film: whether he loses himself or not? Maybe it's his way of finding himself and his place in the world. But to do that, he has to sacrifice, and loses a lot. Maybe he'll never find it. It's up to the audience. Opinions will probably vary, and that's a good thing."

"The problems of post-socialist society have fundamentally influenced the lives of our parents. They've also had a profound impact on my own generation. We need to talk about that — about the slow degradation we feel," says Kristóf, a native of Košice in eastern Slovakia. "It was clear to me the main character had to go abroad. But at first, for quite a while, what I was most concerned with was the hero's age: Should he be from my own generation, or older? In the end, I chose the latter, for both dramaturgical

and personal reasons. I lived in Riga for some time while my wife was finishing film school in Tallinn. My previous short movie won first prize in several cinematography festivals, and a lot of times the prize was 35mm film. Originally, I thought I might use it to



Director György Kristóf

make a short film, but I couldn't figure out a topic that fit, so eventually I decided to go with a feature film. That's how *Out* was born," explains the director. "Western Europe is different now, but these countries have their own specifics, their own humor, and in a sense they're very similar to countries in Central Europe, since we're all members of the former Soviet bloc. There's a large Russian minority in the Baltic countries, almost everyone there speaks Russian, and that helped me and that helped me, from a compositional point of view."

Kristóf's film moves through various landscapes: urban landscapes, open spaces by the sea, but also industrial zones with huge ships. "We hope it made the movie richer. We made a point of showing a lot of different exteriors and interiors, since we stay with one character the whole time and perceive the story through him and his inner story. That's why we avoided locations that were too specific to any one country or city and tried to keep it all in a universal, undefined space," he says.

Also, as the story progresses, the camera gradually moves away from the main character. At first it's close up, but then it pulls back more and more, with increasing use of long shots. "We had planned to apply this concept much more than we did, but it wasn't possible, given the circumstances. But it doesn't matter. Maybe there would be no point. The important thing was for the viewer to get in touch with Ágoston at the beginning, to develop a close relationship with him. Then, as the world around him starts to change, the way you perceive him from outside starts to change with it, and that's what we wanted to capture," Kristóf says.

Director György Kristóf was born in 1982 in Košice, studied philosophy at Miskolc University in Hungary, and was accepted to the Directing Department at Prague's FAMU in 2008. He worked as an assistant director to Ildikó Enyedi and Daniel Young. In 2015 he was the first person from the former Czechoslovakia selected for the prestigious Cinéfondation's Atelier at Cannes. "Taking part in L'Atelier helped me most



Out was shot as a Slovak-Hungarian-Czech co-production, with Jiří Konečný (endorfilm) on the Czech side, co-produced by FAMU. The film was supported by the Slovak Audiovisual Fund, State Cinematography Fund Czech Republic and the Hungarian National Film Fund.

by being able afterwards to reach out for the production grants we had not been able to acquire before. Thanks to that, we were able to take the first step toward shooting the film. We'd taken part in other coproduction markets before, but we had a different status here. We could meet with whoever we wanted, which isn't always the case at other forums. Here, instead of our having to ask potential partners, they came to us. Plus they had already read the script and came in with a specific offer. I kept in touch with Georges Goldenstern, the director of Cinéfondation, so he knew what was going on with the film, and I asked him for advice several times."

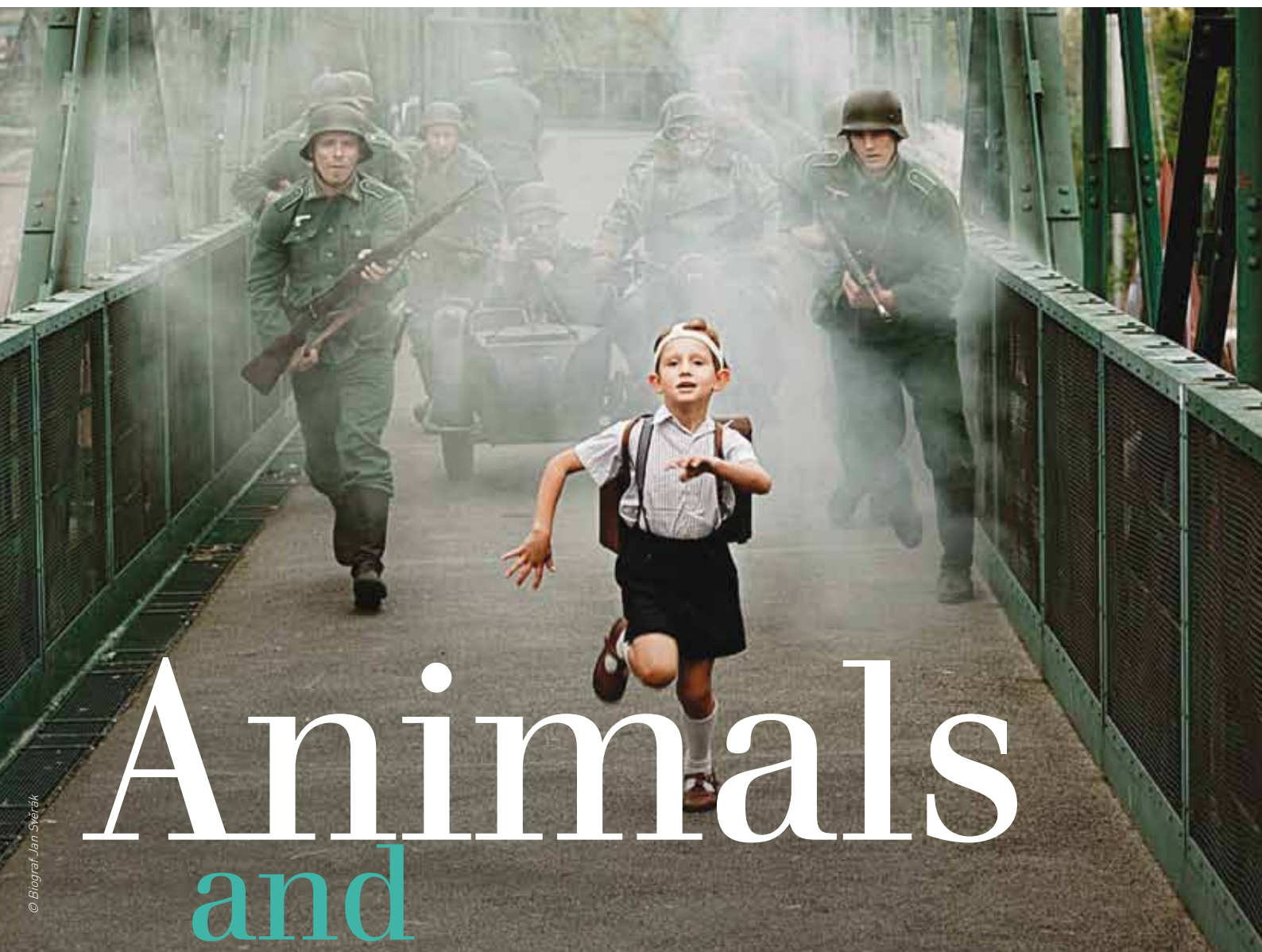
And what's up next for the director? "Right after Cannes, I hope to enter the preparatory phase for this project I have in mind. It's a sci-fi dance thriller that's a metaphor for the political situation after the 1989 revolution. Aside from that, I'm developing a new project that's the exact opposite of *Out*. It's about people who prefer to stay at home, and takes place on the border of three states — Slovakia, Hungary and Ukraine — around the time we joined the Schengen zone. Also, I have an American idea in

Out was produced by Marek Urban / sentimental film (SK), Ferenc Pusztai / KMH Film Productions (HU) and Jiří Konečný / endorfilm (CZ). The film was shot by well-known Hungarian cinematographer Gergely Pohárnok (*Taxidermia*), and stars Sándor Terhes, Éva Bandor, Judit Bárdos and Ieva Norvele. A number of Czech film professionals and companies took part: The Czech producer is Jiří Konečný, who has produced several successful films, including the co-productions *Little Harbour*, *Koza*, *Family Film*, *Aferim!* and *A Night Too Young*. The film was edited by Adam Brothánek, post-production was handled by UPP Studios, and the sound engineer was Jan Richtr. "I'm glad my first attempt at making a movie was one that can compete at the highest international level. From the development of the script to all the post-production work, the Czech contribution to the film was crucial, and I really appreciate it," says Kristóf.

my head, which takes place in 1977 New York, back when the city was still chaotic and free, and clubs were just getting big. DJs played music on sound systems powered by tapping into streetlamps, and one time there was a power shortage for almost the whole city that lasted more than a day."

INTRODUCING

BAREFOOT



© Biograf Jan Svěrák

Animals and

Natural Forces Make a Movie More Authentic

by Hedvika Petrželková

Oscar-winning director Jan Svěrák (*Kolya*) is finishing up his latest feature, inspired by an autobiographical book by his father, screenwriter Zdeněk Svěrák. Titled *Barefoot*, it completes the loose tetralogy launched in 1991 with *Elementary School*.

The film, set during World War II in the Czech countryside, where little Eda and his parents retreat after his father gets into conflict with the Nazi German occupiers, explores this challenging period in Czech history through the eyes of its child protagonist, who sees the war mainly as an opportunity for adventure.

"My dad and I describe our films as intimate stories told from the perspective of a male protagonist, set against the backdrop of historical events," Jan Svěrák explains. *Barefoot* is based in part on the memoirs of his father, Zdeněk, who co-wrote the screenplays for the previous three films in the tetralogy: *Elementary School* (1991), *Kolya* (1997), and *Empties* (2006).

Barefoot takes place in the period just preceding *Elementary School*, which was set just after World War II and also centered on Eda. *Kolya*, which earned Svěrák the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film, was set in the 1980s, before the Velvet Revolution, and the story of *Empties* plays out after the fall of communism. But, according to the director, there are no plans for a fifth film, set in the dark period of the '50s and chronicling the hero's youth.

"My dad is 80 and doesn't want to write scripts anymore," Jan Svěrák says. "When I asked him, he said there was nothing interesting going on in the '50s, no story to tell. So the only place you'll find socialism in our movies is in *Kolya*."

Historical Accuracy

History isn't the primary theme of Svěrák's films, but it is an essential backdrop to his stories, and he puts great emphasis on historical accuracy. "I'm a geek," he says. "I like having all the equipment the way it actually was at the time, the uniforms and weapons, with all the ranks and all that—real enough so you could teach history from it. I don't like it when the filmmakers assume



© Biograf Jan Svěrák

“I enjoy working with both animals and children. It's more demanding.”

enough time has passed that they can do whatever they want. You're still transmitting information to future generations, since the audience takes what they're seeing to be the truth, and they often don't have a way to look up the information, so I try to make my films historically accurate.”

Svěrák himself was born in 1965 and experienced occupation firsthand. They were Russian troops, not German, but he says there were some similarities in the experience. “I used to spend summer vacations with my grandmother in Kopidlno, where the movie takes place, and the tanks would drive by, right beneath our windows, when they were during maneuvers, relocating troops. It would last about an hour, and the whole house would be shaking. So I have some idea how it feels. We tried to make the atmosphere as authentic as possible, but there were all these things we realized along the way, while we were shooting, that were just impossible. For instance, doing a night scene on the street, or at the cemetery on All Souls Day, when normally there would be hundreds of candles lighting up the place, but because of the bombing there were mandatory blackouts, so the cemetery and all the windows in the streets would have been totally dark at night. It wasn't easy.”

Besides creating an opportunity for family drama, the historical background also offers a setting for the more lighthearted events that come with being a city boy who moves to the country. These include encounters with animals: the horses Eda admires and the geese he teaches himself to graze. “I enjoy working with both animals and children,” the director says. “It's more de-



© Biograf Jan Svěrák

INTRODUCING

BAREFOOT



The film has a slew of interesting characters inspired by more or less real Svěrák family ancestors.

manding. You have to let go of the idea that you'll get everything on the first shot, but once you do, it makes for tremendous authenticity. And that's exactly what you're aiming for as a director—to create the most believable world you can. The audience has to feel like they can get inside the movie and experience everything along with the characters. Anything that breaks the illusion, anything that makes you say, 'Hey, it's just a movie,' pulls you out of the story. But children and animals, with the right use of natural forces, go a long way toward making a movie more authentic."

In the starring role of Eda, Svěrák cast first-time child actor Alois Gréc. "We found him by accident," Svěrák says. "My producer's sister used to babysit Alois and his two older siblings when they were little. She sent me pictures of him, then I gave him a screen test, and it turned out he has this incredible quality that his face is constantly alive. Even when he isn't thinking of anything, it looks like his head is swarming with complicated thoughts. There's this amazing Meyerhold effect going on. When you cut from a shot of his face to a funeral, the audience thinks, He's sad. If you juxtapose his face with food, it looks like he's hungry. Besides that, he's also extremely intelligent, so after just two days of shooting he realized how boring it was and said, 'I want to go back to the hotel. Being an actor's no fun!' Svěrák laughs. "I always enjoyed talking to him. We had long conversations about what it means to work, what are the responsibilities of an adult versus a child. I've had kids myself, so I know that when you approach them as equals, using words that they would comprehend, children are capable of understanding everything."

Discovered Family History

The film has a slew of interesting characters inspired by more or less real Svěrák family ancestors. One is an uncle nicknamed "Wolf," a family outcast who allegedly committed a mysterious crime, but in fact turns out to be a victim of injustice. Then there is Eda's grandfather, a strict man who acts as if he were a moral arbiter but in fact has a highly controversial past.

"When my dad first started the screenplay, years ago, the only thing he knew about Wolf was you weren't allowed to talk about him, so he barely appears in the original script. But I found the character interesting, and decided we should try to find out more about him. My dad and I wrote to a relative in Canada we thought might know something, but didn't get an answer, so we went ahead and started work on another movie. It took a while, but finally we heard from her, and the news was a shock. We found out my grandfather had actually been a gambler, and we also got the true story of Wolf's alleged crime, so we actually learned a lot about our family history writing this film. It didn't sink in until later what I'm carrying in my genes: a great-grandfather who was a gambler and terrorized the family, and his son couldn't stand up to him, so instead he took it out on his son — my father — who as a result of this awful experience grew up to be a great humanist, and because of the violence he experienced, he never laid a hand on any of us, he didn't touch his kids. It all fits together," Svěrák says, "sort of a family psychoanalysis."

Thanks to the international success of Svěrák's previous films, *Barefoot* has a good chance of finding a foreign audience, but still, the director doesn't want to get his hopes up. "It's always a gamble what kind of reception a movie's going to get abroad. There's no way to predict. With *Kolya*, for instance, we had no idea it would appeal to anyone in other countries, since the movie's about issues between Czechs and Russians, so ever since then, I've never had any expectations."



CANNES FF

Atlantis, 2003

© VŠMU / FAMU

by Hedvika Petrželková

The year is 2003 and a young Ukrainian couple is trying to get to Western Europe through Slovakia, but it isn't as easy as they expected.

For his new short film, director Michal Blaško, a student at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, chose a subject from Central Europe's recent past. The film, shot as a Slovak-Czech co-production, will be presented this spring at Cannes, in the Cinéfondation section.

Blaško's *Atlantis, 2003*, made in co-production with FAMU in Prague, takes place four years before Slovakia became part of the Schengen Area, which allows passport-free travel between countries in Europe. Martin and Denisija are a young Ukrainian couple who cross the border into Slovakia illegally. Today, the border between the two states is one of the most closely guarded in Europe, but in 2003 it was a heavily trafficked route for alcohol and cigarette smugglers, as well as migration by people who hoped for a better life in Western Europe. Martin and Denisija dream of making their way to Germany, and they are both determined to sacrifice everything for that dream. But their initial enthusiasm is soon crushed by a dramatic experience that changes everything.

Atlantis, 2003 is a Slovak-Czech co-production, with the Czech side represented by Veronika Jelšíková, a student of film production at FAMU in Prague, Petr Hansalík as editor, and several others.

Czech films have a rich tradition of participation in the Cinéfondation section at Cannes, including the drama *Retriever* (dir. Tomáš Klein and Tomáš Merta, 2015), the fantasy comedy *Ham Story* (dir. Eliška Chytková, 2013), the ecologically engaged *Pandas* (dir. Matúš Vizár, 2013), the drama *Tambylles* (dir. Michal Hogenauer, 2012), the tragicomedy *Cagey Tigers* (dir. Aramisova, 2011), and

MICHAL BLAŠKO

(b. 1989) is a student at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. He previously completed studies at the Miroslav Ondříček Academy in Písek, where he majored in directing and screenwriting under the guidance of director Zuzana Zemanová. His short student film *The Wall* (2014) won awards at several international film festivals. His next short film, *Fear* (2015), was also a success, making its international premiere at the San Sebastian International Film Festival, and winning the main prize at Famufest, in Prague, as well as the prize for best short film at Caméflex-AFC, in Paris.

the psychological drama *Bába* (dir. Zuzana Špidlová), which won the Cinéfondation main prize in 2009.



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Breeding Ground for the Next Czech Cinema: Czech Film Springboard 2017

by Martin Kudláč

Following last year's makeover of Finále Plzeň, the annual showcase of Czech cinema, the organizers have decided to add on the industry initiative Czech Film Springboard.

“Czech Film Springboard is a very important event for us, where we capitalize on our experience, contacts, and knowledge of projects,” says Markéta Šantrochová, the head of Czech Film Center, which organizes the initiative. “Bringing experienced foreign professionals to the Czech Republic, offering them attractive Czech projects, and facilitating meetings with them for domestic filmmakers free of charge—these are all part of what we do on an ongoing basis,” she adds. The second edition of Czech Film Springboard welcomed an even larger number of foreign experts than last year’s, as well as facilitating one-on-one meetings with participants and arranging introductions to projects beyond the official lineup.

The 2017 Czech Film Springboard introduced the final installment in Václav Kadrnka’s loose trilogy on “the absence of a loved one.” Following his debut, the minimalistic retro film *Eighty Letters*, and his “medieval road movie” *The Little Crusader*, about the myth of the 13th-century Children’s Crusades, *Saving One Who Was Dead* will be an intimate family drama played out in linear, day-to-day episodes from the lives of a 40-year-old son and his 70-year-old mother after the father falls into a coma. Kadrnka, acting here as writer-director-producer, is now in the early phase of development, working on the first version of the screenplay while also preparing the sound and visuals. He intends to have an intimate atmosphere on set, and would prefer a Slovak or Polish partner on the project. Principal photography and post-production are scheduled for next year. The director describes his new project as a work on “the dead one,” adding, “It’s a message about a miracle, where it was enough just to stay out of the way.”

Czech cinema right now is overflowing with literary adaptations in development. Experienced producer Viktor Schwarcz, of Cineart TV Prague, is producing *Snake Gas*, a film parable loosely inspired by Joseph Conrad’s revered, though frequently misunderstood, *Heart of Darkness*. The project will be directed by Czech play-



/ Petr Kazda and Tomáš Weinreb presented their new project *Nobody Likes Me*

wright, theater director, and surrealist David Jařab, and is expected to shoot in May 2018, with release planned for February 2019.

“The book tells the story on two planes: the description of an adventurous journey, and the perception of the journey as a journey into the heart and the dark recesses of man,” Schwarcz explains, adding that *Snake Gas* is about a man striving to understand who he is and coming to terms with himself. The majority of the project will be shot on the Danube river delta in Romania, and the producer is open to co-producers willing to come on board, as well as seeking a sales agent.

Polish filmmaker and FAMU graduate Tomasz Mielnik, meanwhile, is working on an unlikely adaptation of a 12th-century text. Following his debut feature, the cinema homage *Journey to Rome*, Mielnik’s new project, *Gregorius*, *The Chosen One*, reimagines the ascent of Gregorius to the papal throne by weaving together a patchwork of motifs and myths, including King Oedipus, chivalric and biblical stories, and the history that led Thomas Mann to write *The Holy Sinner*.

Mielnik says his intention is “to make the film in a very simple, ascetic way, tying it to the poetics of medieval literature and painting through editing, dialogue and framing. We’re trying to recreate a sense of medieval language, not with a scientific approach, but by way of



INDUSTRY

CZECH FILM SPRINGBOARD

Night of the Whale is the unique Czech-Iranian co-production

humor and irony.” At Czech Film Springboard, Mielnik revealed that he would welcome coproducers, with preference given to Poland, France and Italy. Production is envisioned for 2019, and the project currently has no sales agent attached to it.

Science fiction remains an underrepresented genre in Czech moviemaking. Producer Jan Kallista, of Film Kolektiv, and emerging director Robert Hlož take a step toward changing that with their latest project, *Restore Point*. Billed as speculative fiction, *Restore Point* was introduced at the European Film Market in Berlin and Asia’s largest film market, HAF, receiving positive reactions: In the not-so-distant future, in the wake of the first refugee crisis, the Free European Federation introduces a new law that guarantees its citizens “one whole life to live.” Kallista said that a co-production with Canada would be ideal, due to the genre nature of the project and Canada’s recent entry into the Eurimages support fund. Negotiations with Slovenia, Poland and Austria are under way, and production work is scheduled for autumn 2018.



2013 Rotterdam winner Mira Fornay has been busy lately on her third feature, *Frogs With No Tongues* (*Cook, F**k, Kill*), expected to shoot this August. The project has already traveled a lot, with two presentations in Marché du Film, at IFF San Sebastian, a win for Best Project at Sofia Meeting in 2014, and presentations at Cinemart in Rotterdam, the Berlinale Film Market, the Karlovy Vary Pitch&Feedback, and overseas, at Toronto Film Lab during last year’s IFF Toronto. Fornay, who hails from Slovakia, borrowed a quote from Federico García Lorca’s *The House of Bernarda Alba* for the title, since they both share the main theme of domestic abuse.

Frogs With No Tongues is billed as an absurd drama, akin to Edward Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf* in taking on the subject of family (“the most aggressive group in society, except for the army and police,” the director remarks), intimacy and gender. To add an extra layer, Fornay says the film will employ video-game principles, allowing the main character to revise parts of his story. Czech Television and the Croatian outfit Kinorama Zagreb are both already on board for the project, which is being produced by Viktor Schwarcz for Cineart TV Prague, with majority support from the Czech State Cinematography Fund in the amount of EUR 280,000.

Petr Kazda and Tomáš Weinreb, the award-winning team of writer-director-producers, are already bracing for a follow-up project after the success of their first feature, *I, Olga Hepnarova*. This intimate portrait of an unlikely serial killer, based on actual events, not only garnered accolades in its travels of the festival circuit,





but saw theatrical release in 11 countries, with licensing for other forms of distribution in Europe, Asia, and North and South America. The pair's sophomore feature, *Nobody Likes Me*, cleaves to a similar, if not identical, line: "again a female main character, but in an urban military environment, with a troubling romantic identity and sexual issues," says French coproducer Guillaume de Seille of Arizona Films. The project is currently in the middle of the development stage, and was pitched at Sofia Meetings, where it got attention from potential co-producers and pitching events. With a likely budget of EUR 1.5 million, principal photography is tentatively set for fall 2018, and negotiations with Slovakia and Poland are ongoing.

The 2017 lineup for Czech Film Springboard also includes the unique Czech-Iranian coproduction *Night of the Whale*. "The story unfolds as the portrayal of an ordinary family trip to Poland, in the hope of getting a breath of fresh air and a change in their lives. But soon the journey is derailed from what it was meant to be, and some long-unspoken truths about the family's past resurface," says the film's Prague-based writer-director Kaveh Daneshmand. He expects to wrap development by start of 2018, with shooting in the fall, and a finish by end of 2018. The project is a co-production of the Czech Republic and Iran and is seeking additional co-production partners from Poland and France. "The story hints at the topics of immigration, alienation, loneliness, and the difficulty of mutual understanding, regardless of one's language and roots," Daneshmand sums up.



Accelerating Domestic Cinema: Czech Film Springboard 2016

After the inaugural edition of Czech Film Springboard, established under the joint auspices of Finále Plzeň and the Czech Film Center, some of the alumni have already moved into the next stages with their projects. In fact, debuting director Tereza Nvotová managed not only to wrap *Filthy*, but also to unveil it at the prestigious international film festival in Rotterdam. "It was really helpful to us taking part in Czech Film Springboard," said the film's producer Peter Badač, of Slovak outfit BFILM. "Based on our presentation at Springboard," he said, "a producer from HBO met with us, and they ended up coming on board as a partner. Plus, a programmer from Rotterdam's film festival invited our film after seeing the project at the Springboard initiative."

Olmo Omerzu's third feature film, presented last year as working title, is already in the editing room. "We made contact with a Polish production outfit, who we're now successfully working with," said Omerzu, explaining how presenting at Springboard helped his project.

A Slovak-Czech co-production *By a Sharp Knife*, based on the infamous true events of an uninvestigated murder, is bracing for principal photography, slated for August and September. "Springboard allowed us to maintain awareness of the film and communicate information going into production," says producer Jakub Viktorín. The film was currently supported by State Cinematography Fund Czech Republic as a minority co-production.

Writer-director Ondřej Hudeček and producer Tomáš Hrubý of nutprodukce introduced their ambitious and eagerly awaited project *Bohemian Rhapsody*, a follow-up to Hudeček's Sundance-winning short, *The Peacock*, in Plzeň. *Bohemian Rhapsody* got picked for TorinoFilmLab after Torino's artistic director attended Springboard. Hrubý said he valued being able "to present the project in front of an international audience as well as in one-on-one meetings."

The new class of 2017 projects now awaits.



You Should Get to the Heart of Things

by Louise H. Johansen

Pavla Janoušková Kubečková and Tomáš Hrubý are the owners of nutprodukce, the production company behind such acclaimed projects as *Wasteland*, an original TV series for HBO Europe, and *Spoor*, the Berlinale award winner directed by Agnieszka Holland. Janoušková Kubečková is this year's Czech Producer on the Move.

The two of them met in FAMU's Film Production Department, where together they produced the student film festival and in the process realized they had similar tastes in film and art — and perhaps similar goals. We met Kubečková and Hrubý in their office, in a rundown building in north Prague, the so-called Art District, where many of the city's creative businesses are based nowadays.

You were still young students when you started your production company back in 2009. Did you ever consider producing under someone who was established?

PAVLA JANOUŠKOVÁ KUBEČKOVÁ: Not really. Both of us wanted to be

independent producers, but it's pretty hard to be on your own. It's always easier and more efficient to work with someone else. That way you have more projects and you can talk things over with them.

TOMÁŠ HRUBÝ: We really sucked as line producers! We kind of knew we either had to make it as producers or we'd have to go and find something else to do. *[both laugh]*

Do you have to agree, to both be turned on by a project to do it?

PJK: Most of our projects we do together, and I think those are the ones with the best results, but of course our roles are different on every project. Tomáš is more into TV series and writing screenplays.

He's an excellent script editor! I'm more focused on international co-production of feature films. So right now the division is very clear.

How would you describe the film environment in Prague and the Czech Republic? Do you feel like you're part of a generation?

PJK: Absolutely not. I feel connected to the people we work with: the authors, directors, screenwriters. That's our safe environment, and we develop and grow inside of that. That's our goal, is to build strong long-term relationships. Some of them are people we've known since school.

TH: There are Czech filmmakers I admire, and I like the way they think,



PAVLA JANOUŠKOVÁ KUBEČKOVÁ

(b. 1985) studied Journalism and Media Studies at Charles University, and Film Production at FAMU. She is part of the 2017 EAVE Producers Workshop and is this year's Czech Producer on the Move.

TOMÁŠ HRUBÝ

(b. 1986) studied Film Production at FAMU, and was Czech Producer on the Move in 2014.

NUTPRODUKCE,

founded in 2009 by Hrubý & Janoušková Kubečková, is the winner of multiple Czech Lions, including the 2013 Czech Oscar entry, *Burning Bush*, directed by Agnieszka Holland. Also in 2013, their animated film *Pandas* took third prize in the Cinéfondation selection at Cannes. In 2017, *Wasteland*, an original TV series for HBO Europe, won the Czech Lion for best TV series, and their co-production with Poland, *Spoor (Pokot)*, also directed by Holland, received the Silver Bear Alfred Bauer Prize at Berlinale 2017.

but I don't feel like there's any national movement we could relate to. I would say we have that feeling more about the generation 20 years before us. They got off to a great start after 1989. Their films made a mark internationally, and also did really well in terms of box office at home. They're much more iconic than anything we've done so far.

Do you have a mentor?

TH: There's one person that influenced me right at the start. A very nonconformist producer Čestmír Kopecký, who worked at Czech TV right after the revolution. We had him as our teacher our first few years at FAMU, and I really enjoyed his perspective on producing. He basically taught us that finances and all the stuff we talk about most in our profession isn't really what's essential, and what you should really be thinking about is the creative aspect — whether it's new, original, interesting. You should get to the heart of things, and be picky, argue with the artists. All that was very inspirational. We already had it in us, but he helped bring it out even more.

PJK: It's similar for me. We both chose this teacher at FAMU. Agnieszka Holland also influenced us a lot. She has her own unique point of view, not just on

filmmaking but the world in general. She is truly inspirational, and sets the standard for us.

Breaking Through

The two producers first collaborated with the legendary Polish writer-director on the miniseries *Burning Bush*, followed more recently by the feature film *Spoor*, which nutprodukce co-produced as minor partner.

PJK: It all started when we had the script for *Burning Bush* and HBO was interested. We didn't really feel like any Czech directors were right for it, so Agnieszka's name came up. She read the script in like two days, then said we should come to Warsaw and meet her to discuss the next steps. There are a lot of funny stories from that meeting! When she first saw us, she was shocked that we had come to Warsaw by train, because we were students and didn't have any money.

What has been your biggest achievement so far?

PJK: It's hard to say. We're quite proud of *Wasteland*, our new TV series, since there were some worries about whether or not we could continue to work on the same level after *Burning Bush*. With *Wasteland* we really started from scratch.

What do you see as your main challenge?

TH: Our dream is to find a way out of the local market and do our work on an international scale. I think that's a common dream, a common ambition we share with thousands of other people. And most of them fail, each in their own

way. So our biggest hurdle is figuring out how to crack that problem.

What are you working on right now?

PJK: We have a new project we're presenting at Cannes, the debut film by the director Zuzana Špidlová. She won first prize in Cinéfondation [in 2009, for her student film *Bába*], and now this project is going to have its world premiere at Cannes, hopefully in three years. She's been working on it for a year now, and it's a very personal film, about a woman in her thirties who has a son with Down syndrome. Her husband leaves her, and she feels marginalized by society.

TH: She decides to do this crazy thing where she goes off on a road trip to Italy with her son, and just ekes out a living doing manual labor, picking apples. It's mostly set in Italy, and what we're hoping is we can find Italian and French co-producers in Cannes — someone who can bring something to the project.



Stillness Sets the Viewer's Mind in Motion

by Louise H. Johansen

Following his feature debut, *Eighty Letters*, which takes place in Communist-era Czechoslovakia, director Václav Kadrnka returns with *Little Crusader*, the story of a father losing his son – this time, surprisingly, set in the Middle Ages.



Václav Kadrnka was born in 1973 in the town of Zlín. In 1988 his family left still-Communist Czechoslovakia for the UK. Kadrnka studied theatre there before returning to Prague to study film directing at FAMU, from 1999 to 2008. His first feature, *Eighty Letters*, premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2011, and garnered him the Czech Film Critics Award as Discovery of the Year.

Liberating Archetypes

Despite its clear interest in history, *Little Crusader* is set at an undefined moment in medieval times. “When I made *Eighty Letters*,” Kadrnka says, “I tried to avoid historical details — with all the props and Communist emblems. By using the medieval period, I could strip away all the details and naturalism to emphasize archetypes. But again, I tried to avoid doing a historical re-creation.”

When asked if he thought this period offered a different way to depict the theme of loss than a contemporary setting would have, Kadrnka’s answer is clear: “Yes, the ideal and the journey in search of the ideal — but a pure ideal, not a politicized one. I wanted to make a film that didn’t relate to anything else but itself, like a monolith. Not to be topical or socially, politically or ideologically relevant. I didn’t want the commitment to relevance that automatically comes with a contemporary setting. I think it ends up making a work ephemeral.”

The Personal Story

In spite of Kadrnka’s wish to avoid tying his work to present-day concerns, his films still display strong personal traits. *Eighty Letters* is told from a child’s perspective, using letters the director’s parents sent to each other after his father emigrated to the UK, leaving his mother

“It liberated me from naturalism and psychology,” the director says of his choice of setting. For inspiration he looked to Jaroslav Vrchlický’s epic poem *The Little Crusader of Svojanov*, using it as the basis for his own story of a father – a knight – who loses track of his son. In the mist of the morning, the young son embarks on a journey through desolate landscapes. As the father confronts the reality that his son has gone missing, he embarks on a search that turns into an exploration of the subconscious.

“It deals with the myth of the Children’s Crusade,” Kadrnka explains, “but the central issue is the boy’s absence and how it affects the father. This was what captured me. We tried to avoid having the Children’s Crusade in the forefront of the narrative, and instead used it more as an inspirational element.”

/ Saving the One Who Was Dead was presented at the Czech Film Center's Springboard, at the Finále Plzeň Film Festival.

left in bureaucratic limbo as she tried to get permission to leave the country with their son.

Kadrnka's debut portrays the feeling of losing a father, while *Little Crusader* is about the father's loss of a son. "Yes, these are the themes that fascinate me," the director says. "The absence of a loved one, the themes of elusiveness and seeking, paternal love, family ties as an expression of grace. I see something very truthful and innocent in them. But I wouldn't want to analyze why I feel that way."

The son's face here feels emblematic of the time — it could be any boy, from any of the generations that grew up behind the Iron Curtain. Asked about his choice of actors, Kadrnka explains: "When I cast a film, I try to look more for a moral resemblance to my characters, rather than a physical likeness. What inspired me with Karel Roden, who plays the father, was his strong bond with his children. I found little Jeník [who plays the son] on a tram in Prague. I was standing at the back of the car when something told me to walk through the tram and I'd find what I was looking for. And sitting there, at the other end, was this little boy with his mother. He looked like a child out of an Odilon Redon pastel. I wanted to trust my inner voice, so I cast him."

Cinematic Approaches

Little Crusader was four years in the making and is shot on location in southern Italy — Puglia, Calabria, Sardinia — real places the Crusaders passed through on their journey. "Brindisi was the harbor where the Crusades sailed off to the Holy Land, so Italy was an obvious choice. I also really liked the natural light there."

In the early part of the film, you get the feeling the father is right behind his son, and will catch up at any moment. But eventually, as the son fades from memory, the father becomes our main focus. "The closer the father gets to the son," Kadrnka explains, "the greater the distance between them. It's like in a dream, when you're trying to reach someone and they're so close you can almost touch them, but then you realize they're actually getting farther and farther away. This feeling of elusiveness was very important to me. I tried to express it with space too, in the father's mental landscape. The first part of the film takes place in very contained surroundings, we don't see the sky. Eventually it opens up into wider spaces, and in the end we're in the desert."

This also involved some clear choices in Kadrnka's cinematic approach, for instance shooting in the 4:3 format. "I wanted to create a tunnel effect that would highlight the father's inner state, especially his loneliness," the director says. "I deliberately left more space over his head, as if he were carrying a heavy load on his shoulders."

Kadrnka continues: "Everything in the film is in motion: the son, the father, and the myth. I deliberately chose stillness in order to create internal intensity. Silence and stillness set the viewer's mind in motion. That's what I'm aiming for. The viewer's perception is what liberates the filmmaker."

The film's still pacing and the protagonist's journey are underlaid with a haunting, highly cinematic string composition by overlooked composers Irena Havlová and Vojtěch Havel.

When asked to describe the feel of the film himself, Kadrnka waxes poetic: "Serene, quiet, and naïve. It is told with a wind in a drapery."

The director is currently preparing to make his third film, he reveals. "My new project is called *Saving the One Who Was Dead*, completing a loose trilogy on the theme of 'the absence of a loved one.' That's all I know for now. I work first and think later."



/ Karel Roden (b. 1962), who plays the father and knight Bořek, is one of Czech cinema's most renowned actors. He is also known for his supporting roles in US productions The Bourne Supremacy and Hellboy, and most recently he starred in Family Film and A Prominent Patient.

From Einstein to Maria Theresa

International Productions Choose Czech Locations

by Denisa Štrbová

After a busy 2016, international productions are in full swing once again at Czech locations this year, including the first season of the *Genius* series produced by National Geographic, the postwar drama *The Aftermath*, Xavier Dolan's *Death and Life of John F. Donovan*, Ben Levin's *The Catcher Was a Spy*, and an ambitious co-production by four Central European public broadcasters, *Maria Theresa*.

“Last year’s highlights among foreign productions in the Czech Republic were three major TV series: *Britannia*, *Knightfall* and *Genius*. Shooting on *Genius* wrapped this March, and it’s definitely one of the most exciting productions we’ve had,” Czech film commissioner Ludmila Claussová says. “Viewers won’t have to wait long for the first episode. It will be airing already on April 23.”

Genius, the first ever scripted show produced by National Geographic, presents the world’s most brilliant innovators. The first season is based on the Walter Isaacson book *Einstein: His*

Life and Universe, adapted for TV by Noah Pink. Geoffrey Rush shares the role of Einstein with Johnny Flynn, who plays the physicist as a young man. Co-producing the series are Fox 21 Television Studios, Imagine Television, Odd Lot Entertainment, EUE/Sokolow and Stillking Films.

“During 90 filming days, starting in September 2016, the filmmakers shot at locations in Prague and around the Czech Republic. Ron Howard, the executive producer and one of the directors of the first season, greatly appreciated the helpful approach of the city of Liberec and, in particular, the support of the local film office,” Claussová says.

Kiera Knightley in *The Aftermath*

The postwar drama *The Aftermath*, a US/UK co-production directed by James Kent, shot in the Czech Republic in January, with Czech locations subbing for Hamburg, Germany. In winter of 1946, Rachael Morgan (Kiera Knightley) arrives in the shattered city to be reunited with her husband, Lewis (Jason Clarke), a British colonel assigned to the city’s postwar reconstruction. The film is produced by Amusement Park Films, Fox Searchlight Pictures and Scott Free Productions. Sirena Film line produced the Czech portion of the shoot.

International productions traditionally choose the Czech Republic to shoot period films or television series. "Unlike contemporary stories, for period pieces you need locations with a variety of architectural styles and historical eras, and you need filmmakers with expertise in a range of creative professions and crafts. We have a lot to offer in this respect. And of course, shooting period stories with us is very cost effective, whether in terms of set construction, hiring extras, or manufacturing props and costumes," Claussová says.

Another period film, *The Catcher Was a Spy*, shot on Czech locations in February and March. Directed by Ben Lewin, this fact-based WWII drama tells the story of pro baseball player Moe Berg, who was a top-secret spy during the war. The movie focuses on his biggest mission: infiltrating the circle of Werner Heisenberg, lead scientist for the Nazi atomic program. The film, starring Paul Rudd, Sienna Miller, Guy Pearce, Paul Giamatti and Jeff Daniels, is produced by PalmStar Media along with Animus Films, Serena Films and Windy Hill Pictures. The line producer on the Czech side was Czech Anglo Productions. "For this film, Czech locations offered stand-ins for sites around the world, from New York, Tokyo and the Alps to Zürich and Rome. One of the producers shared with me how difficult it would have been to shoot in so many places, and how glad they were to find all these locations in just one country, so close by each other. In this respect, the Czech Republic is truly unique," explains Claussová.

The Canadian director Xavier Dolan paid a short visit to Prague to shoot part of *The Death and Life of John F. Donovan* in March. Produced by Lyla Films and Sons of Manual, the film tells the story of John F. Donovan, a rising American actor whose career is cut short when a magazine reveals his pen-pal relationship with an 11-year-old British boy. Line producing in the Czech Republic was Film United.

The biopic *Så længe jeg lever* brought Danish director Ole Bornedal back to the Czech Republic this April. Previously, he had worked here in 2013, on the period

TV series *1864*. Bornedal's new film portrays one of Denmark's greatest musicians, John Mogensen (Rasmus Bjerg), his success and failures as an artist, husband and father. The film is produced by Miso Film, and production services in the Czech Republic were provided by Sirena Film.

Maria Theresa: an ambitious European co-production

"A unique co-production between Central European public broadcasters — Czech Television, ORF of Austria, MTVA of Hungary, and RTVS of Slovakia — began filming April 18 at the Kroměříž Castle. The two-part film centers around Empress Maria Theresa, Central Europe's most significant monarch," says Claussová. The film is directed by Robert Dornhelm, a native Romanian known mainly for *The Diary of Anne Frank*. The cast includes Austrian actress Marie-Luise Stockinger in the role of Maria Theresa and Czech actor Vojtěch Kotek as Francis Stephen of Lorraine. Martin Kurel, awarded the César for *Marguerite* (2015), is production designer. Producing on the Czech side is Maya Production.

"Like every year, several German productions will be shooting with us in 2017. The Germans mostly choose the Czech Republic for costly period TV films and series," says Claussová. In the miniseries *Tannbach*, for example, the Czech locations represent a fictitious village located on the border of Bavaria and Thuringia and divided by a fence

between West and East Germany. In the 1960s, that fence is replaced by a concrete wall, a reality that shapes the villagers' fates and disrupts their personal relationships. "They shot the first three episodes of this ZDF miniseries in the Czech Republic in 2014, then aired them a year later. Shooting on three new films started in fall 2016, and after 75 filming days, wrapped this January. Czech Wilma Film co-produced," Claussová adds.

Marking the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in Germany, several German television projects focus on Martin Luther, including the ZDF docudrama *10 Tage im April: Luther in Worms*. The film is produced by NFP of Germany and Mia Film of the Czech Republic, which is currently also shooting the fairytale *Rübezahl* (ZDF) and two films in the *Zurich-Krimi* series (ARD).

"We're also looking forward to the shoot of the eight-part series *Das Boot*, directed by Andreas Prochaska, co-produced by Bavaria Fernsehproduktion, Sky Germany and Sonar Entertainment. It will start filming here this summer, with Stillking Films line producing, over more than 100 filming days," Claussová says. The broadcast is slated for 2018 in the Sky territories Germany, Austria, Italy, UK and Ireland. The new series is set right after the story depicted in the same-titled novel by Lothar-Gunther Buchheim and Wolfgang Petersen's 1981 Oscar-nominated film. /



Tannbach

Regional Film Offices Call for Attention



In spite of its small size, the Czech Republic offers filmmakers an unparalleled range of locations and architecture. In the six hours it takes to drive across the country from west to east, you find textbook examples of European architecture, from its beginnings in the Romanesque period all the way up to the most contemporary works in glass and steel.

You also find a stunning variety of gorgeous natural scenery: mountains, ravines, valleys, waterfalls, lakes, forests, plains, rivers and more. Add to that the variability of four distinct seasons and it's easy to see why filmmakers love coming here so much.

"The Czech Film Commission has been promoting the country as an attractive filmmaking destination for over a decade now. Unlike most other countries, where

the film offices were initially established in regions and towns, here in the Czech Republic the national Czech Film Commission was established first — in 2004 — and close connections with the regions were sorely missing," explains film commissioner Ludmila Claussová.

"That's why we took the initiative seven or eight years ago and started talks with the regional authorities. We explained the benefits, offered advice on how to attract filmmakers, how to establish

cooperation, what services to offer, and how to market their locations."

The first regional film office was established in late 2011, in Ostrava; the ninth, just a few months ago, in the Moravian capital of Brno. The Czech Film Commission was the driving force behind the founding of all nine regional film offices, and works with them on a daily basis.

The Karlovy Vary Region: Film-Friendly and Looking Forward

One of the most active regional film offices is the one in Karlovy Vary, established in 2012 as part of the Karlovy Vary Region's tourism department. In 2015, it received the Film Friendly Region award, a joint initiative of the Czech Film Commission, the Audiovisual Producers' Association and CzechTourism. We caught up with **Petr Židlický**, who heads the Karlovy Vary Region Film Office.

How would you describe your region?

The Karlovy Vary region in western Bohemia is famous for its spa towns and as home of the renowned Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. It offers a unique blend of luxury hotels, spas, well-preserved historical buildings and monuments, as well as abandoned industrial complexes and dour mountain scenery.

What interesting projects have you worked on recently?

Our most recent accomplishment was our involvement with Josef Tuka's film *The Absence of Closeness*. Almost the entire film was shot on location in the Karlovy Vary region, and I was delighted to hear that the director said it would have been tough to make without our help.

How well did you and the crew work together?

We clicked right from the first time we met. They already had locations picked out, but with some there were problems getting access, so our main role was to act as intermediary between the filmmakers and the locations' owners. We arranged everything and got whatever the crew needed. The fact that it was a low-budget film made no difference to us. If anything, it just made us more eager to help.

Are you getting any feedback from people in the region? How do they feel about having film shoots going on?

A good, professional film office should work closely with the public and understand their needs. Obviously, a film crew, especially in a small town, causes a commotion and upsets the daily routine, so we had to learn how to communicate with people and explain the benefits — not just economic, but also in terms of tourism and publicity for the region. And it worked. Now, people usually get used to film crews pretty quickly, and they're absolutely fine with it, as the filmmakers themselves have told us.

What has been the biggest film shoot in your region to date, and how do you feel about it looking back: What did it bring to your region?

The most famous films shot in our region have been *Shanghai Knights*, *Last Holiday* with Queen Latifah, and the James Bond film *Casino Royale*. These were made before the regional film office came into existence, though. *Casino Royale* was the impetus for a tour of locations used in the film, in Karlovy Vary and Loket, and the Grandhotel Pupp still offers a package called "In the Footsteps of 007."

And the biggest film or television success since your office was established?

Definitely *Rapl (Madman)*, the detective series produced by Czech Television. It was shot in our region in 2015 and aired in fall 2016. The show had excellent ratings and got praise from critics and audiences alike. It was also very visually appealing. The locations were almost like a character in the story, which gave a glimpse into some of the region's lesser-known corners. This tourist season, we're organizing a new program called "Has Travel Madness Got to You? Follow in the Footsteps of Detective Kuneš," which should stimulate interest in visiting the region and exploring sites connected with the series. Besides that, we're in talks with Czech Television again, and things are coming together for the second season now.



Rapl (Madman)

INTRODUCING

JOSEF TUKA

Absence of Closeness

© Silvie Kořenková

by Hedvika Petrželková

Having a child doesn't automatically make you a mother. To what extent are we influenced by our childhood, and how much of it carries into adulthood? Can we be better at parenting than our own parents were?

The *Absence of Closeness*, a psychological drama about a young woman who struggles in her relationship with her child, is the feature debut by writer and director Josef Tuka, a graduate of FAMU. The movie is set in the region of Karlovy Vary and stars Jana Plodková, known for her roles in *Protector* and *Lost in Munich*.

The movie's main character is a hair stylist named Hedvika, a young single mother with a daughter named Adélka. Despite being a single mother, she could be happy, but she is haunted by the fact that she feels more for her dog than she does for her own child. Everything changes when, one night, Hedvika discovers the diaries of her late

father, containing his loving memories of her childhood. Will they awaken motherly feelings in Hedvika?

Josef Tuka explains: "I recently stumbled across the diaries of my grandfather, who had recorded my mother's childhood, and I was surprised at how moving they were. I wouldn't have expected that from a man, and it made me wonder what inspired it: Was it really the feeling of being a father, or was it actually self-centeredness, in the sense of 'Here I am documenting the perfect image of myself'? That's what kickstarted my inspiration for writing the story."

Tuka continues: "When I consulted with Kateřina Schmi-dová, who runs a parent's helpline, she confirmed that

one of the reasons a mother can be alienated from her child is if she didn't experience maternal love herself during her childhood, and this is the story of Hedvika. She has to cope with the coldness of her mother and the absence of her father, who probably would have showed her warmth, but he died when she was little."

The story takes place in the Karlovy Vary region, which is seismically the most active part of the Czech Republic. "Especially between Karlovy Vary and Sokolov, there are often small clusters of earthquakes, with mysterious rumbles emanating from the bowels of the Earth. In the film, we use them to amplify the psychological tension," Tuka explains.

Tuka worked on the screenplay for several years. Once it was finished, he attended the MIDPOINT scriptwriting seminar at FAMU, which he describes as vital. "It gave me the opportunity to work with Milena Jelinek, which was crucial. Especially since *Forgotten Light*, a movie based on one of her scripts, was basically what got me interested in filmmaking."

With a Little Help From My Friends

Like many feature debuts, *The Absence of Closeness* faced funding problems. "As a typical FAMU graduate, I thought the best way to finance the movie would be public funding, through the State Cinematography Fund Czech Republic or with Czech Television. Unfortunately, neither of these options worked out. I had shot both my student films in coproduction with Czech TV, but then there was a glut in arthouse movies, so that was no longer possible. We applied to the Cinematography Fund, but we didn't get support, although we had a decent expertise. The third time we failed, I realized I was out of time—I already had arrangements lined up with the actors, we had a couple versions of the script and the locations were all picked out—so I decided to just use my own



© Adéla Leinweberová

Josef Tuka

(b. 1979) studied radio and TV screenwriting and dramaturgy at JAMU, followed by film directing at FAMU, with Věra Chytilová. He made his first impression with his student films *Sahara Sands* and *Small Circle of Attention*, which won awards at several international festivals (including Cinemaiubit 2010 and River Film Festival 2012). In 2013 he won the competition held by the Filmová nadace with his screenplay for *Blue Ribbon Champagne*.

funds to finance the project and began filming with producer Asmara Beraki. The budget was about 800,000 Czech crowns, or roughly 30,000 euros. About 550,000 of that came from me, through Asmara's company, Cinema Belongs to Us. Fortunately, we also got a helping hand from the Film Office of the Karlovy Vary region, which, among other things, found us affordable housing, helped us communicate with the local police, and secured the key locations. We also got support from corporate partners, like the Imperial Hotel in Karlovy Vary, the Ostrov hospital, and the AutoEder car dealership." In addition, Tuka ran a successful crowdfunding campaign on HitHit.cz that raised 250,000 crowns for post-production.

The shooting took place under rough conditions, Tuka says. "At first I was worried the crew members would be irritated, since we had limited funds, which of course had an impact on working conditions. We slept in sleeping bags and the most inexpensive hostels. I didn't even have an assistant director—all to save money. But it turned out there was no need for concern. The mood on set was great, and to this day, whenever I run into members of the crew, they say what fond memories they have."

Currently, as *The Absence of Closeness* nears completion, Tuka is making arrangements for distribution and getting the movie into international film festivals. "In the fall, we'd like to do a tour of towns in the Karlovy Vary region, featuring discussions with the actors and concerts by the jazz piano player Vojtěch Procházka and lo-fi songwriter Moin Moin, who both wrote music for the film," says Tuka.



© Kateřina Zahradníčková

New Czech Animation:

Strong Stories,

Strong Emotions

by Eliška Děcká

The international reputation of Czech animation comes mainly from its strong tradition and history of master animators, including Jiří Trnka, Břetislav Pojar, and Jan Švankmajer. But there's more to it than that. The Czech animation scene of today is alive and kicking!



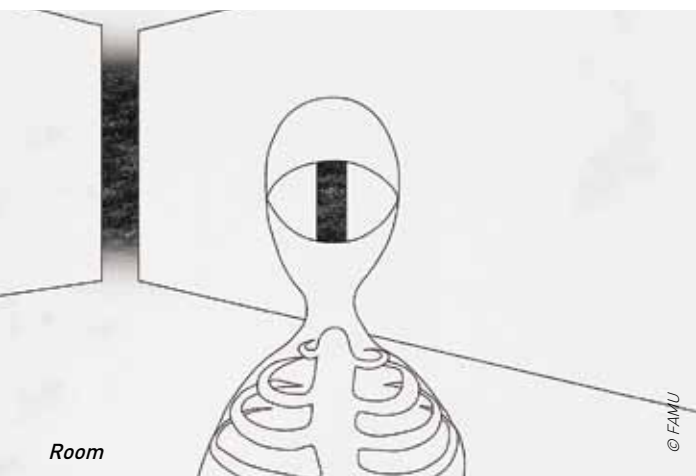
The Awaker

Every year, Czech animation schools produce a rich crop of original short films by young directors that go on to be screened at prestigious animation festivals. After last year's successful appearance at Cannes by Jan Saska of FAMU, with his film *Happy End*, in 2017 the Annecy International Animated Film Festival will present several Czech student films—and, it's worthwhile noting, not just from the storied animation department at FAMU in Prague. *The Awaker*, directed by Filip Diviak, comes from Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín (where the famous animator Karel Zeman created his fantastic worlds). With its penchant for French-style children's illustrations, using simple shapes and poetic colors, *The Awaker* is likely to be popular in the Graduation Films section at Annecy. The story itself, of an older father and his son, is a warm one too, despite its setting in a cold Nordic country in the early 19th century. The title of the film comes from the name of the father's profession: His job is to wake the inhabit-

ants of the snowy village each morning, no matter how hard the cold winds blow. One day, the task becomes too much for him, but his loving son finds an original and beautiful solution.

In addition to the festival circuit, the best Czech student films compete every year in the Czech Lions, the Czech Republic's equivalent of the Academy Awards. The Magnesia Award for Best Student Film is open to all genres (live action, documentary, animation) and starts with twenty nominees, selected in cooperation with the Czech Film Center. Eight this year were animated. One that earned a great deal of attention was *Room*, an experimental animated short by Jana Kristýna Nováčková of FAMU. Shedding the traditional narrative so typical of classic Czech and Czechoslovak animation, Nováčková instead uses shapes and movements—even a zebra at one point—to produce strong emotions in this animated film-essay. "No rules get in the way of ego," as it says, accurately, in the film's synopsis.

On the other side of the animation spectrum is *Shadow Over Prague*, by FAMU student Marek Berger, another entry in the Magnesia awards, and also appearing in many international animation festivals. Berger works with an aesthetic based on old comic books, using a story inspired by a mix of Prague legends: the Golem,



Room

the "Hedge in Cage" brainteaser, and a mystery jumping man who lives in the shadows and fights the Nazis' occupation of Prague. This adventurous film, with quick rhythmic cuts and a fitting genre score, was supported by the State Cinematography Fund Czech Republic and may eventually serve as pilot for a full series.

Oddsockeaters: A Children's Bedroom Revolution

Contemporary Czech animation isn't just student films and short films, however. Proving this is the recent success of the family film *The Oddsockeaters*, directed by Galina Miklínová and produced by Ondřej Trojan of Total

HelpArt T.H.A., with Czech TV, PubRes, Alkay Animation Prague, and Filmosaurus Rex coproducing. The film is based on Pavel Šrut's bestselling book series about a funny gang of small invisible creatures, who live alongside humans stealing and eating our socks—but only one of each pair. The choice of CGI animation was crucial for the film, as Miklínová explains: "The characters themselves are made out of various fabrics, and the CGI programs let us stretch them, make them see-through, twist and twirl them, whatever we want."



The Oddsockeaters started a sort of children's bedroom revolution in the Czech Republic. Kids aren't just reading the books and watching the movie now, but also loving the merchandising, which comes in the form of stuffed toys and, of course, socks. The huge popularity of the books was clearly part of the reason for the film's "healthy run at the box office," as *Variety* put it, with official sales of over 200,000 tickets in Czech theaters only. The creators are now looking to turn it into an international success, as the movie has already been picked up for the United Arab Emirates (Empire Networks), Korea (9ers Entertainment), Poland (Vivarto), and China.

Living Large: Kristina Dufková's Overweight Hero

A similar success story may now be in the making by another well-known Czech woman animator, Kristina Dufková. Dufková, too, has plenty of experience with animated shorts but, like Miklínová, decided it was time to make an animated feature. Dufková's project, provisionally titled *Living Large*, is also based on a book: *La Vie en gros* (2001), by French author Mikaël Ollivier. The main character in the book, which has already won 19 awards, is 12-year-old Ben, who for most of his life hasn't cared that he's overweight. That changes after one summer vacation when he meets Klara. Everybody likes Klara of course, but Ben adores her, which motivates him to lose weight. One day, he gathers up his courage and reveals



© Bionaut

Rosa & Dara

his feelings, but when Klara rejects him, he sinks into depression and his world collapses. His mother brings him to a therapist, who helps Ben realize that it wasn't really worth it. His responsibility is to get back to life and make his dreams come true.

"As soon as I discovered the book, I envisioned it as a classical puppet film. I believe that this is the most fitting way to portray the overweight hero Ben and the world he lives in," Dufková says. "The tongue-in-cheek style of puppet animation will help the audience empathize and fall in love with his character, so the emphasis isn't on the issue of his weight. Though we did decide to add some 2D animation parts, the puppet, with all its endless possibilities, was crucial to this film."

The project's pre-production was supported by the State Cinematography Fund Czech Republic and a Media grant, and they're currently in the process of building the main characters. "The visualization of weight will be accomplished by using detailed skeleton structures, with latex or external silicon modifications. The final surface

will then have the characteristics of thick skin. This will give me plenty of space to play around with the different body sizes in an inoffensive, comical way," Dufková explains.

Production should get under way in early 2018, with a finishing date by 2020. The film is co-produced by Czech Bartletta, an independent company supporting debuting young filmmakers, and BFILM of Slovakia.

Another promising project currently in development is *Hungry Bear Tales*, an animated comedy series about two bears named Nedved and Mishka. The main premise of the series (with 13 episodes currently planned) is that, although bears tend to be loners, Mishka and Nedved are best friends who live together in a cozy house in the woods, where they share a love for food and thinking up funny ways to get it with as little effort as possible.

The series, produced by Bionaut Animation, is co-directed by young Czech animators Alexandra Hetmerová and Kateřina Karhánková, who have teamed up here with Filip Pošivač, a respected illustrator of award-winning children's books. The pilot episode, *Blueberries, Oh Yeah!*, was supported by the State Cinematography Fund Czech Republic, and is expected to be finished in Czech and English versions by this June.

It definitely helps *Hungry Bear Tales* that Bionaut already has experience with a similar animated project, *Rosa & Dara*, now available for free at www.rosadara.tv, an online platform also offering educational games and other downloadable content. These short, adventurous stories, with two 7-year-old twin sisters, Rosa and Dara, as main characters, served as starting point for the forthcoming animated feature *Rosa & Dara and Their Great Summer Adventure* (currently also in development). Both the feature and the series were directed by Martin Duda.



Hungry Bear Tales

Pavlátová: People Often Ask Me, ‘Why Does It Have to Be Animated?’

by Eliška Děcká

After a long string of successes with animated shorts, Michaela Pavlátová has decided to plunge into the field of feature animation with her latest, forthcoming project, *My Sunny Maad*. The film, based on the 2004 novel *Freshta*, by Petra Procházková, was presented at the Cartoon Movie pitching forum in Bordeaux this March.

For her novel, Procházková, a writer, humanitarian worker, and award-winning Czech journalist, used her experience as a war correspondent in Afghanistan and Chechnya to write a powerful, accessible story about an Afghan family, with multidimensional characters and strong women figures.

“Welcome to Kabul. One family — countless secrets,” reads the opening of the official production notes. It continues: “When Herra, a Czech woman, falls in love with Nazir, an Afghan, she has no inkling of the life that awaits her in post-Taliban Afghanistan, or of the family she is about to join.”

Pavlátová herself adds: “I’ve always been interested in strong women characters and relationships, mostly relationships between men and women. That’s how I’m approaching this film, and that’s how I hope people will see it as well — not as a war story, or a political story, or an exotic story about Afghanistan, but a story about one big family, where people love each other but that doesn’t stop them from making things hard and complicated sometimes.”

Procházková’s book is perfect for this approach, especially since Procházková isn’t reluctant to use dark, wry humor in bizarre daily situations. Still, Pavlátová wants to be careful not to overuse certain animated tricks, like exaggeration or shortcuts, in the story’s funnier moments.

“My main goal is to translate the strong emotions from the book to the screen. I want the audience to be so immersed in the beauty of the story that they might even forget they’re watching an animated film. And to do that, you have to be careful about how you use



animation in the funny bits. They might work perfectly in a short animated film, but a feature animation is a totally different creature.”

Pavlátová knows what she’s talking about, since not only does she have a history of success with animated shorts — an Oscar nomination in 1993 for *Words, Words, Words*; a Berlinale Golden Bear in 1995 for *Repete*; and the Annecy Grand Prix in 2012 for *Tram* — but she also has experience with live-action feature directing. Both of her live-action films, *Faithless Games* (2003) and *Night Owls* (2008), were critically acclaimed, too, so it seems like an obvious question to ask why she didn’t choose to make *My Sunny Maad* as a live-action film as well. “People often ask me, ‘Why does it have to be animated?’ Well, it doesn’t. That’s just the way I decided. Animation is my favorite medium, the world where I feel most comfortable, most my true self. I want to show people you can experience all the same strong emotions you get with a great live-action film in a great animation, too.”

This March, Pavlátová presented her new project at the Cartoon Movie pitching forum in Bordeaux, France, and was pleasantly surprised to find she wasn’t alone: a full one third of the pitched projects were animated features aimed at an adult audience.

“It was a big motivator, and it confirmed for me that *My Sunny Maad* has a place in the contemporary animation world. It’s hard to say how successful our pitch was, since you don’t see that until later, when the contracts are finally signed, but personally I feel very positive about the experience. We were approached and contacted by a lot of distribution representatives and potential co-producers who appreciated the emotional power of the project and the personal point of view.”

My Sunny Maad is currently in the financing phase and final phase of preparations. Production should get under way in early 2018, with a finishing date sometime in spring 2020. The film will be a Czech-French co-production between Negativ (Petr Oukropec, Kateřina Černá) and Sacrebleu Productions (Ron Dyens).

‘Fruits of Clouds’ in Annecy

by Eliška Děcká

This year, three Czech movies will appear in the Annecy International Animated Film Festival. The most important is Kateřina Karhánková’s new project, *Fruits of Clouds*, selected for the Short Films in Competition. This will be a return trip to Annecy for Karhánková, who competed in the Graduation Films section in 2014 with her short film *The New Species*.

One of the strongest traditions inspiring Czech and Czechoslovak animation is the genre of “TV bedtime stories” as embodied by *Večerníček*, a program of short animated fairy tales broadcast every evening on the national TV channel since 1965. It is a beautiful tradition, empowering and inspiring for animators, yet at the same time it also means most Czechs still see animation primarily as a children’s medium. Fortunately, this has produced the paradox of more and more young animators in film school focusing their work on an adult audience, in order to show the full potential of animation and break free of the sometimes constricting heritage of children’s bedtime stories. One of the few animators who has nevertheless decided to follow the path of children’s animation, albeit in her own way, is Kateřina Karhánková, currently a postgraduate student in the Animation Department at FAMU Prague. “I like to work with kids,” says Karhánková. “I like the potential impact I can make on them with my films. It’s always such a pleasure to see that something in my films has touched them, moved them, started them thinking about things differently. As an adult, sometimes all you can do is go and see a psychiatrist,”

she laughs, “but as a kid you’re still developing, so you can save yourself a lot of trouble later in your life.”

Curious to See How Children React

Karhánková considers kids an integral part of her filmmaking work, involving them already during the writing process, visiting schools to discuss possible plots and symbolism to make sure she’s on the same page with kids, so it will be clear what she’s trying to get across. This was the process she used for her latest film, *Fruits of Clouds*, selected for the Short Films in Competition section in the upcoming Annecy International Animation Film Festival. “I’m really happy we were selected for Annecy,” Karhánková says. “Especially since so many people were involved and helped with the film. They put so much trust in the project, it’s great that such a wide audience will be able to see it now. I’m especially curious to see children’s reactions and hear their opinions on it. “There’s a dark forest in the film that plays an important part in the story, and I wasn’t sure if kids would be able to relate to the symbolism, but they got it

right away. They said, ‘It’s like when you go to violin class and you’re worried you didn’t practice enough, but in the end it might turn out all right anyway.’”

Karhánková says she wrote the screenplay for *Fruits of Clouds* with her ideal art director in mind, Alžběta Skálová. “I admire Alžběta’s work so much and I know her visual approach, so I was already trying to work all that into the script while figuring out the final story.” Karhánková is also one of the few young Czech animators who regularly collaborates with an art director, allowing her to focus mostly on directing. In *The New Species* (2013), she worked with Filip Pošivač; in *Tony and Mr. Illness* (2014), with Ester Nemjiová. “It’s the perfect way to work for me,” Karhánková says. “It allows me to keep my distance from the whole thing, which is something I really need. Plus, I always have a pretty clear idea about the final result right from the start, so if I feel that my own visual style doesn’t fit, I’d rather ask someone else.” The other two animated films selected for Annecy will be in the Graduation Films section. *We’re Human, After All*, directed by Jan Míka and produced by the Miroslav Ondříček Film Academy, in Písek, tells the story of a hare forced to face hunger, freezing cold temperatures, and threats from hunters and other animals over the winter. Then one day he finds out what a comfortable, safe life rabbits lead. The movie combines two techniques: 2D animation and live action. *The Awaker*, directed by Filip Diviak and produced by Tomáš Baťa University, tells the story of an old man who leads a mundane life waking people up for a living. Until one day, he receives a shiny little bell as payment, and his humdrum routine is transformed forever.



Films to come

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

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FILMS TO COME

IN DEVELOPMENT

IN DEVELOPMENT

Kriegel – The Man in the Way

Kriegel – The Man in the Way tells a story of physician, politician and hero of Prague Spring of 1968 František Kriegel, who had been together with five other leading representatives of Czechoslovakia arrested and abducted to Moscow at night of 21 August 1968. He was the only one out of twenty Czechoslovak politicians who refused to accept and sign the capitulation protocol on agreement with the Soviet occupation. The film is not supposed to be a typical biographical drama but more of a political thriller depicting the most turbulent part of Kriegel's life as well as existential drama of an individual caught in a trap of totalitarian regime. The story is based on yet unpublished facts and the statements of the witnesses.

FICTION

original title: Kriegel – Muž, který stál v cestě

runtime: 120 min

estimated release: June 2018

director: Ivan Fíla

produced by: Miloslav Šmídmajer – Bio Illusion (CZ)

Kryštof

Kryštof, a youth approaching adulthood, is living as a new postulant before taking his vows in a community of monks somewhere at Šumava Mountains. Not only does he share with the brothers their world of contemplation, but also their role as a link in the long chain of smuggling fugitives from the communist regime across the border to Bavaria. He wanted to flee from the world into a monastery, but he have to flee in order to save his life and so that he could understand how brutal political power twists character and at the same time gives the last chance to resist and to save a loved one.

FICTION

original title: Kryštof

runtime: 110 min

estimated release: June 2019

director: Zdeněk Jiráský

writer: Kristián Suda

produced by: Olga Raitoralová – Fulfilm (CZ), Marian Urban – ALEF FILM&MEDIA (SK)

Lost in Paradise

DEBUT

After having built up, managed and lost his underground music club in Prague, in the city his father emigrated from in the 60s, bankrupted Evžen (39) shows up as a surprise guest on his father's 70th birthday in Switzerland. What is planned as a spontaneous overnight visit turns into an odyssey into his past, when he learns about the fatal mountain accident of his friend Jakob. Haunted by the disturbing question why nobody told him about his friend's death, Evžen starts a personally driven "investigation-process". The more he follows Jakob's footsteps, the more he gets discouraged by the "discrete charm of a society", trying to keep a well appearing façade in order to avoid conflict.

FICTION

original title: Ztraceni v ráji

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: October 2018

director: Fiona Ziegler

produced by: Kristýna Květová – Cinématif Films (CZ)

in co-production with: Beauvoir Films (CH)

Mountains in the Mist

Ludmila is 22 and she has just received an official letter. Just like all the other girls of her age, she got assigned a husband to spend the rest of her life with. She is not too bothered, as it is simply a matter of tradition. She has been more worried about the situation concerning her older sister. Sisi has been locked in an apartment with her dead husband for 12 days now. Ludmila struggles to accept the general belief that married men rise from the dead thanks to the sacrifices of their wives and that after some time, the couple ascend to heaven together. It seems though, that Ludmila is the only doubtful one. Ludmila's only wish is to escape. But surely, the journey towards those mountains in the mist will not be an easy one.

FICTION

original title: Vrcholky hor

runtime: 110 min

estimated release: May 2018

director: Agnieszka Smoczyńska

writer: Milada Mašínová

produced by: Julie Žáčková – Unit and Sofa (CZ)

Plague

Rosa is 13 years old. She has two older brothers, despotic father and mother, who is for long months in a tuberculosis sanatorium in the Alps. Mother is supposed to come back home, but she doesn't. Meanwhile the plague epidemic breaks out. Rosa with her brothers, father, dog Tony and the housekeeper, remains trapped in quarantine in a claustrophobic environment of their apartment.

FICTION

original title: Mor

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: May 2020

director: Jan Těšitel

writer: Milada Mašínová Těšitelová

produced by: Petra Oplatková, Artemio Benki – Sirena Film (CZ)

Talks with T. G. Masaryk

It is a film about Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Karel Čapek, two of the most extraordinary thinkers Czech nation ever had, who dedicated their lives to the development of the first Czechoslovak Republic and became their intellectual symbols. However, even such exceptional people are not immune to emotions. The film reflects the difficulty of finding the balance between life and literature as getting to one's inner truth is the hardest thing in the world.

EXPERIMENTAL

original title: Hovory s TGM

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: March 2018

director: Robert Sedláček

writer: Pavel Kosatík

produced by: Jakub Červenka – Bednafilms (CZ)

The Best We Can

Petr runs a small town theatre. He rehearses a new play which should elevate the theatre's reputation. The theatre's budget is reduced. Petr's lover, an actress Karolina, breaks up with him. The situation at home is even worse. His wife suspects something. It is the night of premiere. Petr is proud of his work but the local people don't understand the play and leave the theatre. He tries to cheer his actors but finally collapses in his office. His father in law understands him – the new play, the pressure from the city, the need to be loved and understood. At night Petr and his little son look for his wife. Maybe he never stopped loving her. She comes home with good news. She found finances for his theatre. How, she doesn't want to say. They all sleep in one bed and the golden light enters the room.

FICTION

original title: Jak nejlíp můžem

runtime: 100 min

estimated release: September 2018

director: Alejandro Fernández Almendras

produced by: Guillaume de Seille – Arizona Productions (FR)

in co-production with: Jirafa (CHL), Sutor Kolonko (DE), Veronika Finková – Film & Roll (CZ)

The Prague Orgy

The famous American writer Philip Roth based his book partially on his authentic experiences from 1970's when he used to visit Prague after the Soviet occupation in 1968 in order to help the banned Czechoslovak writers. Despite the political oppression, social life, full of amusement and open relationships was rampant in Prague. The greater pressure of the regime was, the more people would resort to their free private intimate worlds. The story of the Prague Orgy depicts a journey of the famous American writer Nathan Zuckerman who arrives in Prague in 1976. He carries out a mission to save a unique collection of brilliant tales written in Yiddish by smuggling them across the border.

FICTION

original title: Pražské orgie

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: December 2018

director: Irena Pavlásková

produced by: Viktor Schwarcz – Prague Movie Company (CZ)

The Sound is Innocent

DEBUT

Homo Digitalis sings about Homo Electronicus. The electronic music emerged simultaneously at several different places in Europe, growing up from different ideological, technological and cultural backgrounds. One of the key paradigms in the post-war era was the faith in technologies. Techno-optimism was shared by artists and engineers on both sides of the Iron Curtain – despite the different kinds of censorships, they all dreamed about music of the future. The documentary reflects the early days of electronic sound experimentation as a manifestation of the spirit of utopian future. Against dramatic historical background, the story follows the process of creation of a radio opera about the beginnings of electronic music and the influence on our digital society.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: The Sound is Innocent

runtime: 70 min

estimated release: October 2018

director: Johana Švarcová

produced by: Kristýna Květová – Cinématif Films (CZ)

in co-production with: Films de Force Majeur (FR), Punkchart films (SK)

Thief of Dreams

DEBUT

Thief of Dreams is a family film, combining elements of animation, puppet and feature film. This time TvMiniUni have to solve the mystery of strangely obedient children who are not naughty anymore. Terrified parents are asking TvMiniUni for help, they do not recognize their own children. The children stopped being annoying, they are awkwardly wise and without fantasy. Who is responsible for mechanical obedient children? Does the same thing threaten our TvMiniUni children?

ANIMATION

original title: Zloděj snů

runtime: 80 min

estimated release: September 2018

director: Jan Jirků

produced by: Ondřej Zima, Pavel Berčík – Evolution Films (CZ)

FILMS TO COME

IN PRODUCTION

IN PRODUCTION



By a Sharp Knife

Ľudovít has lost his son to a ruthless neo-Nazi attack. But because of a hole in the Slovak legislation, the attackers are soon released and Ľudovít is faced with absurd injustice. He struggles with the apathetic police force, the opportunistic judge, but also with the fact that he was never close with his own son. The more he blames himself for his son's death, the more he drifts apart from his wife Zuzana and younger daughter Janka, and the more he tries to influence the investigation. When he learns that the attack was not an accidental neo-Nazi incident, but involved an organized crime gang, he realizes that he is facing an enemy beyond his powers. He tries at least to save what little he has left – his own family.

FICTION

original title: Ostrým nožom
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: March 2018
director: Teodor Kuhn
cast: Roman Luknár, Ela Lehotská, Miroslav Krobot, Marián Mitaš
produced by: Jakub Viktorín – nutprodukcia (SK)
in co-production with: Pavla Janoušková Kubečková, Tomáš Hrubý – nutprodukce (CZ)



Get Together

Misty autumn. A man and his wife are about to sell their family cottage. The wife is not sure about the sale and thinks the family should at least spend one last night in the house. Her husband doesn't like that idea. While Grandma hates the cottage, Grandpa doesn't really take notice of reality anymore. Daughter lives in Germany with her German boyfriend and Son was recently left by his girlfriend. But Mother insists, so in the morning of the All Souls Day, the family departs for the cottage. The tensions within the family grow. When they wake up in the morning they find out Grandpa has disappeared. It is not clear whether there will be any sale taking place at all.

FICTION

original title: Sešlost
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: April 2018
director: Tomáš Pavlíček
cast: Ivana Chýlková, David Vávra, Tereza Voříšková, Judit Bardós
produced by: Tomáš Michálek, Jakub Mahler – MasterFilm (CZ)
in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ), MEDIA FILM (SK)



Jan Palach

Jan Palach's story is a part of Czech modern history and therefore can only offer a little bit of what the mainstream cinematography defines as a story. His journey to the ultimate sacrifice is not bordered by ups and downs, misleading opinions and corrections, trials, clashes with regime forces, unifying and lecturing of the nation or eccentricities and struggles. He was an average nice young man from a slightly persecuted family. One of many happy young faces of the "Golden Sixties", when protests and opposition were a genetic base of the first post-war grown up generation. He does not stand out. But he's the only one who will do it.

FICTION

original title: Jan Palach
runtime: 100 min
estimated release: August 2018
director: Robert Sedláček
cast: Viktor Zavadil, Zuzana Bydžovská, Denisa Barešová, Berenika Kohoutová
produced by: Viktor Schwarcz – Cineart TV Prague (CZ)
in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ)



Kiruna 2.0

The northernmost city of Sweden is going to be moved three kilometres to the East. Despite the fact that similar situations have already occurred in history (also in the Czech Republic), this case is unique. The city has used its difficult situation and made it into a sensation. The newspapers from all around the world have started writing about the little city above the Arctic Circle, with 15 000 inhabitants, which will become the most modern city in the world. Kristina Zachrisson, the chairwoman of the City Council, said on the stage at the summer Kiruna festival that, "We'll start with a blank slate. People from all around the world will be coming to see how it's done. How you move a city."

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Kiruna 2.0.
runtime: 80 min
estimated release: September 2018
director: Greta Stocklassa
produced by: Veronika Kührová, Michal Kráčmer – Analog Vision (CZ)
in co-production with: FAMU (CZ)
international sales: Syndicado (CA)



My Unknown Soldier

"WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN OCCUPIER?" When in 1968 the armies of Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia, not only Czechoslovak citizens were suffering, but also the occupiers, because often they didn't know the purpose of their mission. Almost after 50 years since the unfortunate moment of the European history, we are discovering the surprising humanity of the occupying soldiers. For the first time we uncover stories of desperate personal sacrifices of those soldiers who committed suicide rather than to live with the guilt from what they caused, even though indirectly, as they were executors of someone else's will. This film isn't about general justice or truth. This is a story about how one becomes unintentionally an "occupier".

EXPERIMENTAL, DOCUMENTARY

original title: Můj neznámý vojín

runtime: 60 min

estimated release: January 2018

director: Anna Kryvenko

produced by: Michal Kráčmer – Analog Vision (CZ)

in co-production with: parabellum film (DE), RTVS (SK), FAMU (CZ), Czech Television (CZ), Baltic Pine Films (LV), Wandal Production (SK)



The Magic Quill

For the sake of order in the world, each region has its hell, where a Magic quill writes down human sins. When a sinner's folder fill up, a devil squad comes to take them. Lucifer's son Boniface is sent to bring a new quill to Pitchfork, but gets robbed by the greedy Mr. Slime who uses the quill not only to hide his sins, but to enslave the villagers and make them dig for a treasure he hopes to use to charm the beautiful innkeeper Margaret. Boniface is scared and slips a fake quill into hell. As it doesn't work, the devils grow lazy. Boniface meets beautiful Margaret and finally admits his mistake and decides to rectify his mistakes. How will things turn out in the end? Will the Good triumph over the Evil?

FICTION

original title: Čertí Brko

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: November 2018

director: Marek Najbrt

cast: Jan Cina, Judit Bárdos, Jan Budař, Ondřej Vetchý

produced by: Martin Hůlovec, Ondřej Beránek – Punk Film (CZ)

in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ), Trigon Production (SK), RTVS (SK), Barrandov Studios (CZ), Michal Bauer (CZ)



Toman

Dr. Zdeněk Toman, born in 1909 in Sobrance, Slovakia as Zoltán Goldberger, was the *eminence grise* - or perhaps eminence rouge in his case for three years following WWII - pulling the political strings from the background. Originally an ordinary repatriation clerk with the exile Czechoslovak Government in London, he quickly rose to the head of Foreign Intelligence Service at the Ministry of Interior. The story provides a fresh look at the recent history of our country as the script is based on thorough research of historical sources and consulting with experts. The film will use archive footage and combine the public political and social reality with the fiction of the private lives of the characters.

FICTION

original title: Toman

runtime: 118 min

estimated release: spring 2018

director: Ondřej Trojan

cast: Jiří Macháček, Kateřina Winterová, Stanislav Majer, Kristýna Boková

produced by: Ondřej Trojan – Total HelpArt T.H.A.

in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ), PubRes (SK), RTVS (SK)



Central Bus Station

Yonathan is a guide at one of the most pitiful place in the world – Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv. The station has become a centre of a ghetto that consists of refugees from over the world. On the endless mazes' corridors, Yonathan's reveals foster home and culturally different inhabitants who became his new family. Everyday rush and the echoes of foreign languages create a contemporary Babel where Yonathan guides those who needs him. The visually experimental documentary shows the station as a character full of stories and people. Despite of the diversity of the place, the station is very consistent in its nature and Yonathan as a guide for the audience is soaking into the building.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Central Bus Station

runtime: 85 min

estimated release: September 2017

director: Tomáš Elšík

produced by: Jitka Kotrlová – Frame films (CZ)

in co-production with: FAMU (CZ)

FILMS TO COME

IN POST-PRODUCTION

IN POST-PRODUCTION



8 Heads of Madness

Soviet Russia, 1921. A 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 even 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
estimated release: October 2017
director: Marta Nováková
cast: Aneta Langerová, Zuzana Fialová, Marie Štípková
produced by: Marta Nováková, Václav Novák – MARFAFILM [CZ], Julietta Sichel – 8Heads Productions [CZ]
in co-production with: Heyday (SK), Czech Television (CZ), Moss & Roy (CZ), Michael Samuelson Lightning Prague (CZ), Cineart TV Prague (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: 95 min
estimated release: 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 (DK)



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 other screen - 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: 85 min
estimated release: September 2017
director: Jiří Sádek
cast: Kovy, Pedro, Shopaholic Nicol, Gabrielle Hecl
produced by: Jindřich Trčka – Cofilm [CZ]



Heads and Tails

Laurentiu gets a serious head injury after having a fight in a bar. He refuses to get treatment, as he is determined to wait at home for his brother's return from work in Germany. He needs to confess something important. We intimately glimpse into his last living day, picking up the puzzle pieces of Laurentiu's life, his fears and the decision that brought him to this ending.

FICTION

original title: Cap și Pajură
Czech title: Panna nebo orel
runtime: 80 min
estimated release: August 2017
director: Nicolae Constantin Tănase
cast: Alex Calin, Iulia Ciochina
produced by: Anamaria Antoci – 4 Proof Film (RO)
in co-production with: Marek Novák – Xova Film (CZ)



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 cosmonaut run ashore on their planet, and their harmonious life, indeed their very survival, are suddenly in jeopardy.

ANIMATION

original title: Lajka
runtime: 85 min
estimated release: 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)



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 humour, and tragedy. It's a character-driven film with epic themes and suspenseful plot.

FICTION

original title: Milada
runtime: 110 min
estimated release: November 2017
director: David Mrnka
cast: Ayelet Zurer, Robert Gant, Aňa Geislerová
produced by: David Mrnka – Loaded Vision Entertainment (CZ)



On Short Leash

On Short Leash is a coming-of-age story about young Jakub. When he finds out that his entire life was a lie, he has no choice but to immediately grow up and deal with a loss of his illusions. Or things will take a wrong turn. Nobody can help him. Not his mother, who told him that his father sails the seas and thus can't be with him. Neither his father, who in fact had not shown any interest in him at all. At this point, he gets in touch, but only because his legitimate son does not care about him anymore. No matter what, he is no Captain for sure. In addition, his sister Pavlína at the age of 16 finds out as well that her life is not what she imagined and that breaks her heart.

FICTION

original title: Na krátko
runtime: 95 min
estimated release: January 2018
director: Jakub Šmíd
cast: Petra Špalková – Tichá, Marta Vančurová, Martin Finger
produced by: Viktor Schwarcz – Cineart TV Prague (CZ)
in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ)



Snowing!

After her father's second wedding, Tereza (30) and her sister Petra (29) return home to their mother's place. Their mother Ester (52) lives with Granny (81) in a rundown family house in which Tereza decides to outlast the split with her boyfriend. Tereza tries to deal with the rules of the house but some things such as mental health condition of Granny cannot be changed. *Snowing!* is a film about attaining knowledge about the order that rules our world.

FICTION

original title: Sněží!
runtime: 75 min
estimated release: January 2018
director: Kristina Nedvěďová
cast: Petra Nesvačilová, Hana Vagnerová, Vanda Hybnerová, Alena Mihulová
produced by: Jitka Kotrlová – Frame films (CZ)
in co-production with: Barrandov studio (CZ), Frame100r (CZ)

FILMS TO COME

NEW RELEASES

NEW RELEASES



Cervena

Olga Sommerová's feature-length documentary about the world-famous opera singer and actress Soňa Červená is the story of a woman whose humble history, private and public life was influenced by the great events of 20th century Europe. Her artistic career includes a hundred opera roles in five thousand performances on the stages of six continents.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Červená

runtime: 80 min

Czech release: 17 May, 2017

director: Olga Sommerová

cast: Soňa Červená

produced by: Pavel Berčík – Evolution Films (CZ)

in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ), Museum Montanelli (CZ)



Garden Store: A Family Friend

A Family Friend, the first part of the trilogy *Garden Store*, is a melodrama set in the 40's during the German occupation. Three young women and two children await the return of their imprisoned husbands and fathers. In those difficult times, a family friend and doctor Jiří is selflessly helping to the family community forced to live together by war and gradually feelings grow between him and one of the women. The film is a story of love that could not have been fulfilled.

FICTION

original title: Zahradnictví:

Rodinný přítel

runtime: 130 min

Czech release: 27 April, 2017

director: Jan Hřebejk

cast: Anna Geislerová, Klára Melišková, Gabriela Míčová, Ondřej Sokol, Martin Finger, David Novotný, Lenka Krobotová, Jiří Macháček

produced by: Viktor Tauš – Fog'n'Desire Films (CZ)

in co-production with: Sokol Kollár (SK), Czech Television (CZ), MD4 (PL)



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 by accident activates 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: 87 min

estimated release: 31 August, 2017

director: Martin Kotík, Inna Evlannikova

cast: Martin Klásek, Helena Štáchová

produced by: Martin Kotík – Rolling Pictures (CZ)

in co-production with: GRID Animation (BE), KinoAtis (RU)



Little Crusader

The knight Bořek sets off on the trail of his missing son. Little Jan has run away from home, rushing after a dream, an illusion about the holy mission of children. His father searches for him in every possible way. But he arrives everywhere too late, finding only witnesses who say they have seen the boy. Gradually Bořek's state of mind starts to crumble and the landscape through which he travels ever onwards increasingly resembles his mental landscape. The only material evidence he finds are items associated with Jan: his little sword and christening coin. These are real clues but he is unable to assess them properly. In the end he is unable to distinguish between reality and a theatrical representation of the myth.

FICTION

original title: Křižáček

runtime: 90 min

Czech release: 3 August, 2017

director: Václav Kadrnka

cast: Karel Roden, Aleš Bílík, Matouš John

produced by: Václav Kadrnka – Sirius Films (CZ)

in co-production with: Artileria (SK), Tempesta (IT), Czech Television (CZ), innogy (CZ), Barrandov Studio (CZ), i/o post (CZ)



Out

The power plant is closing – unemployment takes over a town in eastern Slovakia. Ágoston, a tall, family man in his fifties ventures through Eastern Europe in desperate attempt to get a job and fulfil his dream – to catch a big fish. In Baltic, he finds himself alone and deserted. His voyage leads him deeper and deeper into the ocean of bizarre events and encounters, with tall friendly woman, Russian friend with unfriendly intentions, and sad stuffed earless rabbit. Waves grind on sandy beaches and return to sea. New wave comes to wipe off the preceding one. The sea doesn't end here and it definitely doesn't start here.

FICTION

original title: Out

runtime: 85 min

festival release: May 2017

director: Gyorgy Kristóf

cast: Sándor Terhes, Éva Bándor, Judit Bárdos, Ieva Norvele

produced by: Marek Urban – sentimentalfilm (SK)

in co-production with: KMH Film Productions (HU), Jiří Konečný – endorfilm (CZ)



Quartette

Have you ever played in a band? It is like your second family, with all of its history, and with whose members you 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 our quartet of so called contemporary classical music get together at another concert. This 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

estimated release: October 2017

director: Miroslav Krobot

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

produced by: Ondřej Zima – Evolution Films (CZ)

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



Skokan

Skokan, 28 years old man, finished his stay in prison. He is given the clothes in which he was arrested there a few years. Outside, in front of the wall decorated with barbed wire, the street is empty. Nobody expects Skokan. In the city where he lands, he has nowhere to go. No house. No work. His family does not want him. Overnight, he decides to leave everything in order to launch his singing career, and heads for the Cannes Film Festival.

FICTION

original title: Skokan

runtime: 93 min

Czech release: 8 June, 2017

director: Petr Václav

cast: Julius Oračko, Klaudia Dudová, Zdeněk Godla, Karidja Touré

produced by: Jan Macola – Mimesis Film (CZ), Tom Dercourt, Sophie Erbs – Cinema Defacto (FR)

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



DEBUT

The Absence of Closeness

The film tells a story of a single mother Hedvika and her newborn Adélka. Hedvika is struggling with the lack of maternal affection towards her daughter. When she one night finds the diaries of her late father from the time of her own childhood, she decides to try to overcome the absence of closeness by reading them and by visiting the places she used to know as a child. She tries to uncover the whole painful family history despite her mother's strong disapproval in order to reconcile with her own past and to move towards the future. The Absence of Closeness is an intimate psychological drama taking place at the end of one hot summer.

FICTION

original title: Absence blízkosti

runtime: 85 min

estimated release: July 2017

director: Josef Tuka

cast: Jana Plodková, Anna Cónová, Pavla Beretová

produced by: Asmara Beraki – Cinema Belongs To Us (CZ)

in co-production with: Magic Lab (CZ)



Czech Shorts at One Place



Discover the films online
www.filmcenter.cz/shorts2017

The Czech Film Center has been involved in promotion of Czech short films since 2010, when the first collection of Czech shorts was released. In early 2017, the 8th edition of the collection was published by CFC, this time only online as a part of newly established database replacing the DVD format. The online database contains all films from the previous annual collections and the selection of Czech shorts which succeeded at major international festivals. The online catalogue serves also as an overview of the shorts that have resonated outside the Czech Republic, as well as a curated list of short films selected by a professional jury, which are promoted by the Czech Film Center worldwide.

