What's Slovak in Berlin?

February 20 — March 1, 2020

Slovak Film Institute
The year is 1980. Michal and Juraj are students at a theological seminary in totalitarian Czechoslovakia. Fearing the dissolution of their school, the tutors are moulding the students into a shape satisfactory to the ruling Communist Party. Each of the young seminarians must decide if he will give up the temptation and choose the easier way of collaborating with the regime, or if he will subject himself to draconian surveillance by the secret police.

Servants is formally characterised by its ostentatiousness and also its subdued nature. As if inner discipline and order managed all its parts. In this case the form corresponds wonderfully to the theme, which is the functioning of the Roman Catholic Church in totalitarian times. At the same time, the film is about individual stories of courage and fear, moral solidarity and the pragmatism of survival. How did you get to such a theme? What is there that appeals to you in it? And what does it say about the world of today?

I wanted to make a film about the socialist period in Czechoslovakia, but with an overlap with the present. One day, Slovacko actor Vlado Zborň told us his story. He studied at the theological faculty under the communists, but he was expelled from the school. Subsequently, secret police agents came up with an offer – if he collaborates with them, he gets the chance to return to school. Zborň did not return and we had a nice theme. The story of coming of age and confrontation with reality, when one has to choose which side to take, is universal and always topical. Last but not least, however, the title Servants refers to the fact that we are always under the influence of some higher powers that control us, whether consciously or unconsciously, and which sometimes incoporately alter our deeds and attitudes. Then it can easily happen that someone finds himself in a trap and serves something that doesn’t correspond to his values at all.

How did you look for the final shape of the film with the screenwriters and then with the cinematographer Juraj Chlpík?

First, we were concerned with Marek Letšáček about how Rebecca Lenkiewicz would react as she is not used to such a long preparation, but every time she got used to our slow pace. We expected she would bring the precision of “western” dramaturgy to the writing and, at the same time, bring the precision of “western” dramaturgy to the writing and, at the same time, the temptation and choose the easier way of collaborating with the regime, or if he will subject himself to draconian surveillance by the secret police.
The drama of an extraordinary man, reflecting the age-old struggle of the two principles that have controlled humanity from the very beginning. Good and evil. Love and hate, cruelty and mercy, faith and betrayal. All that in one person against a background of historical twists. Míkolášek’s extraordinary abilities are redeemed in the battle with his own demons who force him into cynical violence.

When and how FURIA FILM became co-producer of Charlatan?

At the time when we were wrapping up The Cellar, which was also an international project, I was approached with an offer to co-produce Charlatan. Reading the script, immediately saw the immense potential of the project and the name of Agnieszka Holland as the director also played an important role in my decision-making. At the following meetings with the Czech co-producer, I learnt further details of the project, including the other team members: people like DoP Martin Šrba, costume designer Katarína Štúrová Bieliková, set designer Mílan Býček, or lead actor Ivan Trojan. All of that indicated a strong film with a strong potential to succeed.

What qualities does a project has to have to make you interested?

I am drawn to stories. The story has to have my interest. I am drawn to stories that I consider the intelligibility of the film for the audience outside Slovakia.

Being open to all genres, I tend to stories of ordinary people, their everyday lives and problems, the relation between individuality and society. I prefer simple narratives with a strong message. At the same time, I don’t see any allure in political-themed stories. One of the reasons why I avoid them is the enormous frustration from the current political leaders that you see everywhere. In no way I mean to diminish the importance of such films, they are important. But I feel that because of the media people are not living their own lives anymore, but rather the lives of the politicians and political scandals.

As a producer, of course, follow the trends in the market and choose projects according to what is missing and demanded. For some time already, I have been observing a certain uniformity of themes in Slovak films. That is something I would like to avoid.

Could you tell us something about your other upcoming films or projects?

We have just finished another co-production project, this time between Czech Republic, Slovakia and Latvia called The Cellar that should enter the Slovak distribution in autumn 2020. The film, set in the ice hockey community, deals with the issues of being a teenager, bullying, and the need of being accepted, being part of the team that is playing not exactly fair.

There are two other projects in the development. One, Lovec, builds on the Slavic mythology but is set in the present times. It points out to the forces that intervene with our lives and influence our actions. Production-wise, it will be a difficult project that I plan to realize as a European co-production. The other project is on the mainstream side, and it will be a comedy.

Every project has its specificity and needs a different approach. For The Cellar, I was the main producer and I worked with Russian director, French lead actor, Russian lead actress, as well as with Czech and Slovak actors and international crew. Russian director (Igor Voloshin – ed.) was not acquainted with the Slovak situation and realia; in a quite short time, he had to familiarize himself with them. He didn’t know our actors either. That made the development of the film, casting, location scouting, and the shooting itself a bit more challenging. Moreover, we were shooting in three languages. That went surprisingly well and we all managed, only proving that in art the language is not a barrier.

As for Charlatan, the situation differed. Agnieszka Holland knows the Czech Republic and Slovakia very well, she is familiar with the mind-set of people, with the country, as she had already worked here on several films. That was a big asset. Still, the difficulty level of the preparation and making of this film was high too.

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The film is a reaction to the current wave of post-humanist thinking caused by the development of technology and artificial intelligence as well as the climate crisis. The human species is coming to recognize its insignificance and transience, and human identity has found itself in a crisis. FREM attempts to reflect this feeling and creates a dehumanized and alienated view of landscape and nature beyond the human perception of reality. Incomplete thoughts and fragments of dialogue, diverse music interrupted by rushes and glitches, and the seemingly confused, unanchored camera, create a disturbing, philosophical reflection on the limits of anthropocentric thinking.

Was your intention to use the vast landscapes of Antarctica and its post-apocalyptic feel to hint the problem of climate change? Moreover, both, AI and climate change are among the greatest threats to human species, they are both getting (or, quite probably, soon will be getting) out of our control. Do you think there is a connection between the two?

We got used to the idea that scientific and technological inventions will help us deal with the increasingly complex problems that we create. And climate change is an extremely complex problem. To be able to evaluate connections among millions of different inputs and outputs, influences and micro-influences, we collect huge amounts of data and we use various forms of AI that help us make sense out of them. It’s only one of the AI’s applications in areas where our mental capacities are inferior. At the same time, we are creating artificial neural networks based on evolutionary biological mechanisms that are able to learn and improve themselves. No-one can predict where exactly this silicon evolution will lead. There is a reasonable concern presented by part of the scientific community, that as soon as AI exceeds our level of intelligence, we lose control over it. At the same time, we are working very hard on our self-destruction by accelerating the climate change. Today it’s clear that its impact is unavoidable; the question is only how fatal for (not only our) biological species it will be. And here comes the idea which initiated FREM – the emergence of a new, post-human observer, a possible witness of our extinction.

Your film is about an artificial intelligence breaking into the physical world and coming to know it. How did you come up with the idea?

For a long time, I have been following the progress in AI and other technologies we are developing in an effort to overcome the evolutionary biological limits of our species. The evolution of AI can be pretty unpredictable which is stimulating artist’s imagination. In my film, the main character is not a human being, but a new form of a non-human entity observing the natural world we are part of. I think we are living in times when we need to address our position in the world from a planetary perspective instead of using our usual anthropocentric perspective and that involves a certain distance from ourselves. Maybe it’s also a question of our survival on this planet we are systematically and successfully destroying.

Your film suggests the presence of AI as an independent agent, yet it seems to be without a “physical body” – we only get to know it through its “sight”. Why did you choose this approach?

When watching the film, I wanted to suggest the feeling of being inside the head of this entity. AI’s “mental processes” are spatially distributed using the 5.1 sound architecture, which also supports this idea. As to the visual, we decided to use a subjective camera, which hopefully helps the audience to identify with the “main character”, even if it refers to a non-human experience. However, the aspect of a body and physicality is present in the film, at least in the form of a shadow on the snow. At one point, it becomes evident that what we are following is not just an abstract consciousness. As suggested in the prologue, the entity uses a sort of “physical prosthesis” to step out of its natural digital environment to explore the organic one.

Why did you choose to shoot in Antarctica? Its environment evokes pre-human or post-human times...

That was exactly the reason! Even though talking about the pre- or post-human era in the context of geological time is irrelevant – the human era is absurdly short. Nature and matter were here long before us and will remain here long after we are gone. In Antarctica, you are very well aware of this fact. The landscape around you is mostly inorganic, monumental, beautiful and indifferent at the same time. It offers itself to be observed and reflected upon by human consciousness in its short moment of existence.
Jaroslav is a handsome and seemingly good-natured son, father and decent husband. But, in fact, he is pathologically jealous of his wife Blanka and very much afraid that she will leave him one day with their three children. Jaroslav and his family do not hesitate to employ violence, deceit and terror against others, which ultimately leads to a family tragedy.

Market Screenings

Czech (CZ), Slovak (SK), 2019, 116 min., Fiction
Director & Scriptwriter: Mira Fornay
DOP: Tomáš Sysel
Cast: Jaroslav Plesl, Petra Fornay, Regina Rázlová, Jan Doman, Jazmína Cigánková
Production: CINEART TV Prague (CZ), MIRAFOX (SK), RTVS (SK), Czech Television (CZ), Synergia film (CZ)

Festivals & Sales: LOCO FILMS
info@loco-films.com
www.loco-films.com

Slovak Producer: Marko Škop, Ján Meliš
ARTILERIA artileria@artileria.sk
www.artileria.sk

WORLD PREMIERE: Black Nights Tallinn FF 2019
SCREENING: Feb 22 12:50 CinemaxX 11 *EFM
Sales: Sebastien Chesneau
cercamon sebastien@cercamon.biz www.cercamon.biz

Let There Be Light
Nech je svetlo

Milan (40), a guest-worker in Germany, discovers that, back home in Slovakia, his teenage son has become involved with home-grown militias and is accused of bullying and killing a classmate. The father starts to seek out the truth about what happened, the truth about himself...

Market Screenings

Slovak (SK), Czech (CZ), 2019, 93 min., Fiction
Director & Scriptwriter: Marko Škop
DOP: Ján Meliš
Cast: Milan Ondrik, František Beleš, Zuzana Konečná, Daniel Fischer, Ľubomír Paulovič
Production: ARTILERIA (SK), Negativ (CZ), RTVS (SK), Czech Television (CZ)

Festivals & Sales: LOCO FILMS
info@loco-films.com
www.loco-films.com

Slovak Producer: Marko Škop, Ján Meliš
ARTILERIA artileria@artileria.sk
www.artileria.sk

WORLD PREMIERE: Karlovy Vary IFF 2019
SCREENINGS: Feb 21 16:15 Cinemaxx 2 *EFM

What’s Slovak in Berlin?

Czech (CZ), Slovak (SK), 2019, 16 min., Fiction
Director & Scriptwriter: Mira Fornay
DOP: Tomáš Sysel
Cast: Milan Ondrik, Jiri Vešperka, Monika Dohnalová, Blanka Palagka, Katharina Hraniková
Production: CINEART TV Prague (CZ), MIRAFOX (SK), RTVS (SK), Czech Television (CZ), Synergia film (CZ)

Festivals: Dorian Magagnin cercamon dorian@cercamon.biz www.cercamon.biz

World Premiere

Black Nights Tallinn FF 2019
SCREENING: Feb 22 12:50 CinemaxX 11 *EFM
Sales: Sebastien Chesneau
cercamon sebastien@cercamon.biz www.cercamon.biz

Slovak Co-Producer: Mira Fornay
MIRAFOX mirafox.mira.fornay@mirafox.sk www.mirafox.sk

This film was financially supported by
A country somewhere at the foot of mountains is controlled by high-ranking criminals, people connected to politics, mafia, the police, courts. Can the truth survive?

What’s Slovak in Berlin?
SK, CZ, 2020, 98 min., fiction
Director & Scriptwriter
Mariana Čengel Solčanská, Rudolf Biermann
DOP
Ivan Finta
Cast
Jozef Vajda, Marko Igonda, Daniel Heriban, Gabriela Marcinková, Diana Mórová
Production
IN Film Praha (CZ), Magic Seven Slovakia (SK), CinemArt SK (SK)

Festivals & Sales Princ Films
info@princfilms.com
www.princfilms.com
Slovak Producer CinemArt SK
office@cinemart.sk
www.cinemart.sk

SCREENING ►
Feb 25 12:40 CinemaxX 16 *EFM

European Shooting Stars
Katarína Krnáčová
producer

TO BE PREMIERED IN 2020
Summer Rebels
fiction – completed
Summer is finally here! Jonas is excited to be spending the holidays with his grandpa Bernard. But with no wife and no job, grandpa is not in the best of moods. Jonas knows something needs to be done. This is the beginning of a turbulent summer story which ends in an extraordinary friendship.

Stand Up
fiction – in postproduction
Michael, a stand-up comedian, dreams big. Flying high, he quits his day job and hassles a new TV show to become a famous name in Slovakia. However unprepared for what is coming, his American niece and fresh college dropout Julia seeking a new start in Europe clips his wings and puts him back into orbit.

Contact
Silverart
katarina.krnacova@gmail.com
www.silverartfilm.sk

Every year, European Shooting Stars, one of EFP’s flagship programmes appoints a jury of five prominent industry figures to select Europe’s best young actors and actresses from a variety of up-and-coming acting talent from all over Europe. The 2020 jury also includes Slovak producer Katarína Krnáčová.
In 2012, Tomáš Krupa directed and co-produced his feature debut Graduates: Freedom Is Not For Free. In 2013 he established production company HAILSTONE focused on producing independent creative documentaries. Its latest release THE GOOD DEATH is the result of an international coproduction of Slovakia, France, Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic. The documentary had a world premiere at Ji.hlava IDFF 2018 within Between the Seas section focused on best films from Central and Eastern Europe. It has been screened at film festivals all around the world, won several film awards and was theatrically released in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

UPCOMING FILM
We Have to Survive documentary – in development
Mankind is unlikely to stop the climate change, but it can adapt to new conditions. Dystopian documentary about people from areas in the world that have been hit by a big disaster where life is subject to extremely difficult conditions.

Contact HAILSTONE krupa.tom@gmail.com www.hailstone.sk

Emerging Producers is a promotional and educational project of the Ji.hlava IDFF, which brings together talented European documentary film producers. Since 2017, following the success of the previous five editions, the programme was extended with an additional four-day meeting in Berlin and producers’ presentation during the Berlinale. Slovak Emerging Producer 2020 is Tomáš Krupa.

Slovakia’s film and TV cash rebate for international productions increased to 33% from January 1, 2020. Learn about the country’s locations highlights, information about the film infrastructure and examples of major projects that have been shot in the country.

Berlinale Talents is a development programme for emerging filmmakers and drama series creators that stands for sustainable promotion and exchange amongst different disciplines of the film industry. This year, Slovakia is represented by Martin Smatana, who is currently preparing animated short Hello Summer.

Berlinale Talents
Martin Smatana
director, scriptwriter and animator

What’s Slovak in Berlin?
Emerging Producers 2020
Tomáš Krupa
director and producer

UPCOMING FILM
Hello Summer
Short animated movie depicts funny situations which happen to a family during their summer holiday, using the objects of everyday life which they packed to their luggage, combined with hand drawn animation which changes those objects into the other forms.

Contact Martin Smatana smatana.mato@gmail.com www.martinsmatana.com

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What’s Slovak in Berlin?
Emerging Producers 2020
Tomáš Krupa
director and producer

UPCOMING FILM
We Have to Survive documentary – in development
Mankind is unlikely to stop the climate change, but it can adapt to new conditions. Dystopian documentary about people from areas in the world that have been hit by a big disaster where life is subject to extremely difficult conditions.

Contact HAILSTONE krupa.tom@gmail.com www.hailstone.sk
Every year, European Children’s Film Association not only pays special attention to quality films for young audiences, but also brings European children films into the spotlight. My Grandpa Is an Alien is among the seventeen titles shortlisted for the ECFA Award thanks to the ECFA Award at the Olympia International Children’s Film Festival in Pyrgos, Greece. The decision about the winner will be taken by members of ECFA, that is by more than 100 film professionals from different fields of the industry incl. production, distribution, festivals and media education. The award will be given by all ECFA members and will be presented during the Berlinale 2020.

A seven-country co-production, My Grandpa Is an Alien tells a story of Una (9) and an alien robot who have 24 hours to find her grandpa who was kidnapped by aliens. This extraordinary adventure will lead to a new friendship, the rational robotic logic will be replaced by emotions, and Una’s selfless love will save her half-alien family.

The 48th edition of the prestigious International Film Festival Rotterdam (Jan 22 – Feb 2, 2020) presented two Slovak documentaries and one fiction film.

A six-hour film essay in four acts Communism and the Net or the End of Representative Democracy (d. Karel Vachek), which explores the philosophical optics of the history of regimes and revolutions, leaders and martyrs screened in its international premiere within the section Perspectives. The Deep Focus section offered a world premiere at the same time of the feature documentary Alchemical Furnace (d. Jan Daňhel, Adam Oľha), an exceptional portrait of one of the most original and internationally renowned representatives of Czech-Slovak cinema - director and artist Jan Švankmajer. Švankmajer is known to the IFFR audiences, as he was a guest in Big Talk on the occasion of the world premiere of his film Insect in 2018. The last but not least is yet another figure that has already left a mark at the IFFR, Mira Fornay. The director whose second feature My Dog Killer won the Tiger Award in 2013, revisited the festival with her latest fiction feature about the pathological jealousy Cook F**k Kill in the Voices section.
A Year Around the World with Slovak Classics

For a third year in a row, the prestigious Lumière Festival, Lyon (France) became the place of the world premiere of recently digitally restored film – an expression of liberated and spontaneous rhythm inspired by folk poetry, surrealism, and naive artists, Wild Lilies (1972) by Elo Havetta. Kolkata IFF (India) honoured the work of the New Wave scriptwriter and director Dušan Hanák by holding a retrospective with 322 (1969); Pictures of the Old World (1972); Rosy Dreams (1976); I Love, You Love (1980) and Paper Heads (1995) in the lineup. Moreover, the filmmaker presided the International Competition Jury.

A western-like, personal revenge story set on the backdrop of the Slovak National Uprising Captain Dabač by Paľo Bielik (1959), and an existential, primordial struggle for survival in snowbound mountains The Bells Toll for the Banished by Stanislav Barabáš (1966) were selected for the Austrian Film Museum and Viennale held O PARTIGIANO! Pan-European Partisan Film retrospective in Vienna (Austria).

Kafkaesque comedy The Barnabás Kos Case by Peter Solan (1964) became the hit of 2019. A travelling programme The Central European Cinema of the Absurd, 1958-1990, curated by a film historian Gabriel Paletz brought it to the HKIFF Cine Fan Programme (Hong Kong) and National Gallery of Art in Washington, D. C. (USA), while it also caught the eyes of the programmers of Karlovy Vary IFF (Czech Republic) and Cinefest Hamburg (Germany). Additionally, Blu-ray release of the film was among the finalists of Il Cinema ritrovato DVD Awards 2019 and received a special mention by jury member Shivendra Singh Dungarpur. Thrac of Experiment in Slovak Short Films, a programme of shorts made in the 1960s and 1970s originally curated for Intl. Short Film Festival Oberhausen (Germany) in 2018, inspired the altered shorts programme together with Dušan Hanák’s feature-length Pictures of the Old World (1972) and in Ljubljana (Slovenia) they made part of Slovak Film in Czechoslovakia at Slovenska kinoteka. Bibliotheque publique d’information au Centre Pompidou in Paris (France) included World Championship (1970), a medium-length documentary by Milan Černák into its Faster, Higher, Stronger programme dedicated to sports documentaries.

2019 marked a successful year for international presentation of Slovak audiovisual heritage. Slovak classics left the safety of the archive to set off on a journey around the world visiting numerous prestigious film festivals, cinematheques and cultural institutions.

And back to Vienna where this spring, the Austrian Film Museum will hold a retrospective dedicated to Czech, Slovak and Czechoslovakian animated films made within 1920-2020. The proposed program encompassing around 50 screenings would closely cover the long-standing tradition of Czechoslovak animation, but also show a myriad of not-yet-canonical works, including contemporary student films or works on the verge between animation and experimental film.
On Your Marks! Na značky!

This film was supported by financially

On Your Marks! was presented at Karlovy Vary FF and received the Best Director Award in 2017.

Once There Was a Sea… Bolo raz jedno more…

The film is inspired by the Aral Sea and the stories of the people that the director met when she was exploring the disaster of the Aral Sea, which has almost disappeared because of the ill-informed decisions of the comrades from the Soviet Union. We follow the participants feel under more and more pressure, which leads to many intense situations. The struggle of the Sokol members becomes an absurd metaphor for our society.

*Maria Pinčíková’s feature debut On Your Market has completed the intensive workshop dok.incubator SK.

The Report

Správa

The Report tells the story of their extraordinary courage and is directed at younger audiences.

Peter Běbják’s feature The Line world premiered at Karlovy Vary FF and influenced the course of WW II. The report reached W. Churchill and F.D. Roosevelt and influenced the course of WW II. The Report tells the story of their extraordinary courage and is directed at younger audiences.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN CINEMA STAND NO. 111 Gropius Bau

Slovakia is hosted at the European Film Market in Berlin for the 15th time. With friends and colleagues from the Czech Republic and Slovenia, under the umbrella stand “Central European Cinema”, Slovak Film Institute offers an informational and promotional point for Slovak cinema and a networking place for Slovak film professionals and their international counterparts.

Come & meet us at the EFM!

The Report

SK, CZ, PL, DE, IT, min., fiction
Director Peter Běbják
Screenplay Jozef Paštěka, Peter Běbják
DOP Martin Zarán
Production D. N. A. (SK), Agresywna Barxa (PL), Evolution Films (CZ), Österreichfilmproduktion (OE), RTVS (SK), Czech Television (CZ), TVP (PL)
Producer D. N. A. nfd@naproduction.sk www.naproduction.sk

Festivals & Sales Beta Cinema beta@betacinema.com www.betacinema.com

On April 7, 1944, Alfred Wetzler accomplished something inconceivable – along with his younger fellow prisoner Vrba, he escaped from the heavily guarded death camp Auschwitz. After an exhausting journey, the fugitives reached Slovakia and compiled a report about the genocide. The report reached W. Churchill and F.D. Roosevelt and influenced the course of WW II.

The Report tells the story of their extraordinary courage and is directed at younger audiences.

Slovaki Cinematography Centre > seat of Creative Europe Desk Slovak Republic > Kino Lumière > Klapka.sk Store > member of FIAF and EFP

On Your Marks!

SK, CZ, PL, DE, IT, min., documentary
Director Joanna Kožuch
Screenplay Joanna Kožuch, Katarína Moláková
Production BFILM (SK), Anima-Pol (PL), TVP (PL), RTVS (SK)
Producer Peter Badač
BFILM info@bfilm.sk www.bfilm.sk

The film was presented at Clermont-Ferrand 2019.

The Report

The film is inspired by the Aral Sea and the stories of the people that the director met when she was exploring the disaster of the Aral Sea, which has almost disappeared because of the ill-informed decisions of the comrades from the Soviet Union. We follow the participants feel under more and more pressure, which leads to many intense situations. The struggle of the Sokol members becomes an absurd metaphor for our society.

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SLOVAK FILM INSTITUTE AND SLOVAK FILM COMMISSION JOIN FORCES TO PROMOTE SLOVAKIA AT INTERNATIONAL FILM MARKETS.

EUROPEAN FILM MARKET, BERLINALE 2020

MARCHÉ DU FILM, FESTIVAL DE CANNES 2020