

## **SLOVAK ANIMATION FILM / 1960s to 1980s**

### **Foreword by Rudolf Urc to the DVD edition released by the Slovak Film Institute**

*( © Slovak Film Institute 2009 / The DVD contains 16 animated films from the period of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. The selection includes all the leading filmmakers of the contemporary history of Slovak animated film and all the major creative techniques, styles and poetics that the presented animators represent in their works.)*

For Slovak cinema to be able to claim all genres in the mid-1960s, the only one missing was the animated film. The first attempts of young authors (Veronika Margotsyová, Jaroslava Havettová, the Popovič brothers), the newsreel minifilms by Viktor Kubal and the Prague group around Vlastimil Herold accelerated the process of constituting the Animated Film Group at the Short Film Studios in Bratislava. The year 1965 marked the statutory establishment of film animation in Slovakia.

The 1970s brought an ambitious influx of animators establishing a creative framework. The social atmosphere of the era was quite difficult, political censorship was at full force, it rejected black humor, absurdity, allegory, hyperbole (all the tools genuine to animated film language). Many new films are based on social criticism, referring to socialist reality as well as to more general human values, relations, and ethics. Among them dominating was the work of Viktor Kubal, who authored the very first Slovak animated feature. The late 1970s saw the arrival of the first puppet films arising at first from the local amateur community, later made by professionally trained filmmakers (Ivan Popovič, Milan Peťovský, František Jurišič, Vladimír Pikalík, Štefan Martauz, Helena Slavíková-Rabarová, Peter Cigán, Jan Švankmajer). The repertoire of the new productions was more and more re-focusing on children audiences, one of the contributing factors being the increasing number of animated “bedtime stories for children“, a genre own to the Czechoslovak Television studios in Bratislava.

Slovak animated film production entered the 1980s with new graduates from visual arts academies (Ondrej Slivka, Jaroslav Baran, Vladimír Malík, Blanka Šperková). They are making also experimental films combining different technologies, pixilation, live acting included in animated or puppet films. Cooperation is established with studios in the neighbouring countries and cities – Prague, Munich, Dresden, Sophia, Tbilisi. The authors reflected on the contemporary feelings, where people live in a society that increasingly reveals the weak sides of the existing political and economic model.

The early 1990s saw the dissolution of the film institution monopoly and the filmmakers aimed their efforts at the building of small production companies, which however were not ready to produce their own programs. After the end put to animated bedtime stories for children, the public broadcasting network definitely closed the door for original Slovak animated cinema. The only outlet was to be found in advertising and in production made on order from Slovak or foreign companies. In 1993 the Department of Animated Film is opened at the newly founded Film and TV Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, which was at the time the first university in this territory focusing specifically on the teaching of classical and digital animation. The very first graduates showed remarkable talent and their films signalled a renewal of this production genre in Slovakia. But that is another story – we will talk about them at the release of the next DVD selection.

Rudolf Urc

#### List of films:

Zem / Earth (Viktor Kubal, 1966, far./color, 8 min.)

Dita na fronte / Dita at the Front (Viktor Kubal, 1969, far./color, 8 min.)

Pieseň / Song (Ivan Popovič, Jaroslava Havettová, 1969, far./color, 5 min.)

Dvaja dobrí kamaráti / Two Good Friends (Viktor Kubal, 1972, far./color, 8 min.)

Janko Hraško a bacily / Janko Hraško and the Bacilli (Viktor Kubal, 1974, far./color, 7 min.)

Varila myšička kašičku / Little Mouse Cooked a Gruel (Vlastimil Herold, 1974, far./color, 9 min.)

Strážca sen / Dream the Guard (Ivan Popovič, 1979, far./color, 9 min.)

Kontakty / Contacts (Jaroslava Havettová, 1980, far./color, 12 min.)  
Balada v čipke / A Ballad in Lace (Dagmar Bučanová, 1981, far./color, 9 min.)  
Múdre prasiatko / The Wise Little Pig (František Jurišič, 1982, far./color, 11 min.)  
Do pivnice / To the Cellar (Jan Švankmajer, 1983, far./color, 15 min.)  
Jar / Spring (Helena Slavíková-Rabarová, 1983, far./color, 7 min.)  
Dáždnik / Umbrella (Ondrej Slivka, 1984, čb/b&w, 5 min.)  
Ki-ki-ri-kí / Cock-a-doodle-doo (František Jurišič, 1985, far./color, 8 min.)  
Kúzelník a kvetinárka / The Magician and the Flower Girl (Vlastimil Herold, 1986, far./color, 14 min.)  
Bábätko v banke / Baby in the Bank (Vladimír Malík, 1988, far./color, 6 min.)