

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ANIMATED FILMS

# ANIFILM

2<sup>nd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> MAY 2023, LIBEREC

## Introducing the Anifilm 2023 Programme

This year's Anifilm International Festival of Animated Films will take place in Liberec from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> May. In addition to its attractive competition programme, the festival will also introduce Japanese animation. With its Lifetime Achievement Award, Anifilm will honour the work and mastery of Czech animator Alfons Mensdorff-Pouilly. Renowned guests serving as Anifilm jury members (including an Academy Award-nominated director, and an animator collaborating with Wes Anderson and Guillermo del Toro) will present their work and festival visitors will have a chance to see amateur animated films made before 1990. Children and their parents can look forward to many films and proper entertainment, particularly in our Animo programme, but also in animation workshops. Almost every festival day will end with a midnight screening of terrifying and raunchy films.



## Travel to Japan With Anifilm

The main theme of the non-competition programme of the upcoming Anifilm is Japan. The visitors can look forward to an extensive programme aiming to introduce various shapes and forms of Japanese animation. To help the visitors explore the vast imaginative world of Japanese animation, we have invited curator, film critic, producer and director of the renewed Hiroshima International Animation Festival **Nobuaki Doi**. His approach stresses foreign influences that helped to form the Japanese art of animation. What role did European animation, Jiří Trnka and Jan Švankmajer play in that process? The festival will try to answer these questions with the help of many renowned guests. One of them is legendary animator **Koji Yamamura** – in addition to his films for children and grown-ups, Yamamura will present his drawings at an exhibition named Four Flashing Figures organised by Anifilm in collaboration with the Liberec Regional Gallery. **Sarina Nihei**, whose unmistakable style was inspired by Estonian animation, and **Mirai Mizue**, master of colourful and captivating abstract animation, will screen some of their films and lead masterclasses. Central-European motifs will be present in the work of **Kaoru Furoko** who will have a presentation. Focus on Japan wouldn't be possible without iconic feature films such as Hayao Miyazaki's ***Howl's Moving Castle***. The festival will also screen new films and less-known gems and curiosities such as the digitally restored version of erotic anime ***Belladonna of Sadness*** and Keiichi Hara's latest film ***Lonely Castle in the Mirror***.

## International Competition will Present Latest Animation

Anifilm's **Competition of Feature Films** is traditionally one of the most attractive festival sections. No wonder. The competing films are usually eagerly anticipated and remarkable works of art. That is the case of Alberto Vázquez's disturbing film ***Unicorn Wars*** which transfers the bloody reality of war into a pink-violet world of fluffy bears. Another eagerly anticipated film is the autobiographical opus by Latvian-American independent filmmaker Signe Baumann ***My Love Affair with Marriage***. Autobiographical elements are also present in ***No Dogs or Italians Allowed*** by Alain Unghetto. Hungarian film ***Four Souls of Coyote*** by Áron Gauder is a mystical spectacle just like ***Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman*** by Pierre Földes based on the stories by Haruki Murakami. Children will appreciate the charming French film ***Yuku and the Himalayan Flower*** by Rémy Durain and Arnaud Demuyneck; adventurous film ***Perlimps*** by Brazilian Academy Award winner Alê Abreu; wacky Norwegian puppet comedy ***Three Robbers and a Lion*** by Rasmus A. Sivertsen; and a sequel to the successful film ***Ernest & Celestine*** titled ***Ernest & Celestine: A Trip to Gibberitia*** by Julien Chheng and Jean-Christophe Roger. Also Czech Republic is represented in the Competition of Feature film thanks to its co-production participation on Slovak film ***The Websters Movie*** by Katarína Kerekesová.

This year's selection of **36 short films** is more varied than it used to be. Not only does it include films nominated for the Academy Award (***The Flying Sailor*** and ***Ice Merchants***), films by classics and renowned masters (such as Priit Tender and Debra Solomon) as well as up-

and-coming talents. Some competition films were made in Czech co-production. These include the BAFTA-nominated atmospheric film *Middle Watch*, psychological drama *Scale* and the remarkable puppet film *Salvation Has No Name*. The students, whose 35 films compete this year, cannot be denied vigour and courage to experiment. In addition to a traditionally big number of French entries, this year saw an increase in Hungarian submissions. Czech film schools are represented thanks to FAMU and films *Dede is Dead* and *Rising Above*.

Fans of **music videos and abstract and non-narrative animation** can look forward to 22 music videos and 23 non-narrative films representing various artistic styles approaches. Czech filmmakers in the category of abstract and non-narrative animation are represented by Viktorie Štěpánová, Kamila Müllerová, Tan Lui Chan and Veronika Chocenská. In the category of Music Videos it's Eliška & Lee Oz, Tomáš Hájek and Miroslav Frič.

In the **National Competition Czech Horizon**, Czech filmmakers compete against but also draw inspiration from each other. The viewers will have a chance to be the first ones to see a new series by renowned Czech director Lucie Sunková titled *Vicky, the Sleepy-Bye Owl*; and for the first time in the Czech Republic, children will see Jan Míka's *The Goose* which was screened at the prestigious Clermont-Ferrand Festival. The winners are picked by the **Council of Animated Film** with more 100. The winner of the award for Best Czech Student Film traditionally wins also sound post-production time in **BEEP Studio**, the partner of the award for the Best Short Film is the **PPF Foundation** and the award for the Best Czech Creation is the **Czech Television Award**.

This year is the fourth year that Anifilm organises a competition for the medium of **virtual reality**. The competing projects include for instance the acclaimed Czech film *Darkening* accompanied by a special installation. For this year's **International Competition of Computer**, the jury picked fifteen titles to compete for two awards – Best Visual Art and Best Game for Children.

The **juries of this year's Anifilm** will once again be composed of prominent personalities from the film industry. In addition to the abovementioned Japanese artists **Mirai Mizue** and **Sarina Nihei**, our festival will welcome director **John Stevenson** nominated for an Oscar for his film *Kung Fu Panda*, Belgian-Korean animator **Kim Keukeleire** who contributed to the success of films such as *Chicken Run* (dir. Peter Lord, Nick Park), *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* (dir. Wes Anderson), *Frankenweenie* (dir. Tim Burton) and *Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio*. Other jury members include renowned Polish director **Marta Pajek**, whose films have won many awards, and two other acclaimed filmmakers: VR specialist **Mika Johnson** and director **David Súpup**. Anifilm will also welcome festival curator and journalist **Sébastien Sperer** and **Veronika Bednářová**. The jury of the competition of computer games is composed of **Jakub Špiřík**, **Zuzana Slavíková** and **Gregorios Kythreotis** who won last year's award for Best Visual Art with his game *Sable* – we will have chance to see him play the game at his gaming session hosted by Anifilm. Liberec will also welcome many authors of competition films. The festival visitors can look forward to meeting many acclaimed filmmakers such as directors **Jean-Christophe Roger** (*Ernest and Celestine: A Trip to Gibberitia*), **Áron Gauder** (*Four Souls of Coyote*) and Rasmus A. Sivertsen (*Three Robbers and a Lion*).

## **A Taste of the Accompanying Programme**

This year's Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented to animator **Alfons Mensdorff-Pouilly**. During his career spanning several decades, he worked on countless short films, series and feature films. Thanks to his superb animation skills, humour and kindness, he has become a sought-after colleague and a legend of domestic stop-motion animation. His extensive filmography includes popular titles such as *The Vanished World of Gloves*, *The Pied Piper*, *Jan Werich's Fimfárum* and series *Pat and Mat*, *Yaya and Paya* and *Doings of the Hippopotamus Family*. Anifilm will screen a selection of his animated shorts and two feature films, *The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, *a Sailor from York* and *One Night in a City*.

In addition to our extensive **programme for children and families** titled **Animo**, Anifilm will screen short films nominated for **this year's Academy Awards** and to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of **Czech Radio**, the festival has prepared a block of animated films focusing on radio. The festival hasn't forgotten the popular **midnight screenings** not suitable for children. Traditional programme **Taking Stock** will recapitulate last year's animated feature production on the Liberec historic square and some may be surprised by films from our programme focusing on the history of Czech **amateur animated film**. These unique films working outside official structures will be screened from 16mm films and accompanied by live music. Section **Born in Liberec** will focus on Liberec native **Oldřich Kaiser** who appeared in many animated films and series. Anifilm also couldn't forget the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of two renowned Czech filmmakers – director Břetislav Pojar and graphic artist Miroslav Štěpánek. The festival will screen the legendary series *They Met Near Kolín*.

**Animation workshops** are popular events where children, under the tutelage of film professionals, can make an animated film of their own or try the work of a sound designer. This year, the programme will focus on courage which is always needed. In the festival's **Game Zone**, you can test the competition games and VR projects. Last but not least, the programme also includes **exhibitions, concerts and puppet theatre**.

This year's Anifilm will host the first **Czech Horizon Grant Supported by PPF Foundation** pitching. Its goal is to support the production of Czech professional short animation. The selection committee has chosen ten projects to be presented to the public and the jury. The winners will then share a 1 million CZK grant. The pitching event is one of many items on the menu of our **industry programme** traditionally held in the Grandhotel Zlatý lev and newly in the Liebieg Palace nearby.

The author of the visual identity of this year's Anifilm is graphic artist, director, animator and illustrator **Filip Pošivač**. Fans of Czech animation are certainly familiar with his puppet films (co-directed by Barbora Valecká) *Deep in Moss* (2015) and *Overboard!* (2019) and series *Live from Moss (Živě z mechu)*, (2016). Children surely know the Czech Lion-nominated film *The Hungry Bear Tales* (2020) on which he worked as graphic artist. His visual identity takes us into a mossy micro-world of the Jizera Mountains.

The festival centre will once again be located in **Chateau Liberec** and every visitor's first steps should lead there. Other festival venues include the Varšava Cinema, Cinema City, Small Theatre, Naïve Theatre, North Bohemian Museum, Grandhotel

Zlatý Lev, Technical University in Liberec, Liebieg Palace, Dr. Edvard Beneš Square and Regional Gallery Liberec.

More information at [www.anifilm.cz](http://www.anifilm.cz)

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