



PRESS-KIT

# JOURNEY TO ROME

A CZECH-POLISH SPIRITUAL COMEDY

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# JOURNEY TO ROME

## LOGLINE

A shy watchman is sent out with a stolen masterpiece on a smuggler's journey that unexpectedly becomes a spiritual adventure. On the train he encounters not only various stories from the dream interpreting passengers, but also himself.

## TAGLINE

All roads lead to Rome.

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

There are as many stories in the world as there are people, and Vašek, a timid guard at a gallery who becomes a reluctant painting thief, hears plenty of them on his train trip to Rome. This multilevel comedy road movie (on a train) and quest for the meaning of life is director Tomasz Mielnik's feature debut.

## SYNOPSIS

The day's work never ends for a guard worth his salt, even when the gallery closes at seven. And Vašek is a perfect example, at least until he meets Ginger – a femme fatale who has her own plans where he's concerned. Love turns this nice lad into a thief: armed with a false moustache, sunglasses and a stolen painting, he gets on a train and it remains to be seen whether or not his journey to Rome is paved with good intentions. The train compartment is full of passengers keen to impart their life stories – to him or to anyone who'll listen. The withdrawn young man pays close attention to it all, even though he has plenty to worry about as it is. The police and a bunch of crooks are hot on his heels and it's difficult trying to give them the slip with a hefty painting in tow. Spiritual comedy, railroad movie, a polemic on our journey through life – Tomasz Mielnik's feature debut is all these. This wide-ranging, highly stylised story filled with references to film classics uses hyperbole to ask, "What, in fact, is the meaning of life?"

## DIRECTOR

Tomasz Mielnik (b. 1980, Wrocław, Poland) studied art history at the University of Wrocław. He then moved to Prague where he completed his film directing course at FAMU with the feature *Journey to Rome*. During his studies he made several shorts: *On Sunday* (V neděli, 2008), *Remembering Mother* (Vzpomínka na matku, 2008) and *Anonymous* (Anonym, 2009). His short documentary *Conductor* (Dyrygent, 2009) came out as a supplement to a monograph on Zygmunt Molik. The film that earned him his bachelor's degree, *Girl 180* (Holka 180, 2010), was shown at festivals around the world, including the Molodist IFF in Kiev. In 2013 Mielnik attended a workshop organised by the International Filmmaking Academy headed by Bernardo Bertolucci, Gian Vittorio Baldi and Abbas Kiarostami.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Seven years ago I wrote a dissertation about the self-portraits of a baroque painter Michael Leopold Willmann. There are frescoes of St. Joseph in the chapel in Krzeszow. Willman was not really interested in the biblical story but he wanted to portrait the people of their time. He tried to show she variety of different types of figures. The feeling of colorfulness and interchanging characters remained in me for a long time. I rather responded to the technique and the shades of color than the story or the ideological message of the frescoes. Hence, when I think of the script to the "Journey to Rome", I see the frescoes of appearing and vanishing characters; painted with intensity. Then the story got two layers. On the surface it is an adventure of a smuggler, underneath its a story of modern man seeking salvation in the spiritual heart of Europe - Rome. Thats why it's structure might maybe remind of the Divine Comedy.

Visually it should also contain two levels - using some of Melville and Hitchcock on one side (back projections, wardrobe, colours), but reminding of italian cinematography of the sixties on the other side. This film is a frescoe to me. Frescoe of a lonely modern man, who is fatigue and uninterested, but decides for the last time to go out and search for his spirituality.



## **ON FATE AND ART**

### **Interview with Tomasz Mielnik**

**You deal with very serious topics in your film. Which is the most important to you?**

I am very interested in the theme of fate. Could the fact that my nose looks like a potato and I walk like Chaplin combined with Isaac de Bankolé have a bad influence on my life? Or whether I was born under a lucky or bad star? And what does it actually mean to be born under a lucky star? Miloš Forman was surely born under one, because at my age he already had 10 Oscars... But under what star were Nietzsche, Jesus Christ or the Dalai Lama born? And what does it really mean to live a happy life? I must admit I am troubled by this question at times, and I hope this is evident in my film.

**Why did you opt for such a strongly stylized visual form?**

The stylized form of my film was inspired by art, namely the period of transition between Gothic and the Renaissance, with its characteristic flatness and centred composition. The unrealistic nature of such stylization enables you to more easily mingle reality and fantasy, which you can use to comic effect. Art references deepen the meaning of the film. Or at least they give that impression.

**How long did you prepare the film, and what was the most complicated part of the development process?**

Waiting for funds for the film was very difficult for me. I spent endless hours in pubs, hospital and on the roofs of high buildings with beautiful views. I got the feeling I missed the boat and should have stopped making films and left for a faraway Greek island to paint live models. And writing the script was also very difficult. If it is at all interesting, then it is thanks to the ideas of my friends, Martin Jelínek, Vít Zapletal and Vít Poláček.

**What are your future plans?**

I always wanted to be a rock star, but I must admit I can't sing. I'm a grown-up now, so I have to think rationally. I graduated in art history. Now I finished the directing programme at FAMU. At the moment I'm considering studying something new, this time a more serious subject. Heart surgery, for instance, law or conducting. Doctors, lawyers and conductors seem so classy. They must have a lot of money and girlfriends. I'm not sure what would make me happier. I'll admit I'm still looking for something.

## FILM CREDITS

starring **V. HRZINA, B. KOHOUTOVÁ, N. DIVÍŠKOVÁ, J. ENGLERT, M. DONUTIL, J. ŠVARCOVÁ, J. NAJVERT, Z. HUDEČEK, I. CHMELA, P. SLAVÍK, I. BAREŠ, J. TURNER, E. ČEKAN, T. HANÁK, I. UHLÍŘOVÁ, M. MOŠTÍK, I. VOJNÁR, V. GOTTWALD, Z. ZAMACHOWSKI** and others

written and directed by **TOMASZ MIELNIK**

co-written by **VÍT POLÁČEK**

director of photography **JAN ŠUSTER**

editor **ŠIMON HÁJEK**

sound **MICHAELA PATRÍKOVÁ, DAVID TITĚRA**

original music by **MARTIN KLUSÁK**

production designer **PAVEL NOVÝ**

costume designer **TOMÁŠ CHLUD**

make-up artist **MARTINA GAJDAČOVÁ**

casting by **MAGDALENA ZLATUŠKOVÁ**

first assistant director **PETR HARTL**

line producer **KLÁRA ŽALOUDKOVÁ**

produced by

**MIKULÁŠ NOVOTNÝ, RADIM PROCHÁZKA, WERONIKA CZOŁNOWSKA, MICHAL KŘEČEK**

delegate production company

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**Background Films** is a young company based in Prague, Czech Republic. It is focused on film projects with the highest artistic ambitions, co-production potential and the expectation of meeting international standards.

*Journey to Rome* (dir. Tomasz Mielnik, 2015) – IFF Karlovy Vary 2015, East of the West competition

*Resort* (dir. Martin Hrubý, 2015) – IFF Karlovy Vary 2015, documentary competition

co-producers

**Czech Television** – public broadcaster in Czech Republic

**Film and TV Faculty of Academy of Performing Arts in Prague**

**EasyBusyProductions** – producer in Poland – Weronika Czołnowska

**MagicLab** – Prague based image postproduction studio

supported by

**Czech Cinematography Fund**

**Polish Film Institute**

## FILM INFO

original title	Cesta do Říma
English title	Journey to Rome
genre	spiritual comedy
language	Czech
completion	2015
world premiere	2015 Karlovy Vary International Film Festival
duration	101 minutes
picture	color
screen ratio	1:1,85
sound	5.1
available formats	DCP, Blu-Ray, Quicktime, DVD

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