



Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

KARLOVY VARY IFF UNVEILS OFFICIAL SELECTION AND JURIES OF THE 60TH EDITION

Official Selection of the 60th Karlovy Vary IFF

Sixty festival editions spanning the eighty years of its existence serve as a doubly powerful invitation—not only to look back at the rich past of an event established shortly after the end of World War II, but also to examine how closely the current programming team's view of world cinema's evolution resonates with the pioneering work of their predecessors, both past and recent.

The nearly forty titles in the main program, all premiering in the spa town at the beginning of July, boast extraordinary geographical diversity. The exclusive presence of Myanmar and Colombia in the Crystal Globe competition naturally connects across a six-decade arc with the progressive decision of one of the festival's founders and long-time director of programming, A. M. Brousil, to focus intensively on the then-young and undiscovered non-European cinemas.

The filmmakers presenting their work in person to the Karlovy Vary audience this year cross boundaries both spiritually and physically. The fact that the countries of production or filming locations of these projects often differ—even continentally—from the filmmakers' countries of origin is far more commonplace today than in the past. One of the defining characteristics of the films in this year's main program is the directors' impressive effort to comprehend the diversity and complexity of the world through firsthand confrontation, and through a relentless search for the relationship between the artistic and the political, the intimate and the societal.

The official selection of the jubilee edition offers a dialogue between seasoned veterans of world cinema and first-time directors, fifteen of whom are featured across the Crystal Globe Competition, the Proxima Competition, and the Special Screenings section. This, too, makes Karlovy Vary a place of continuous dialogue between interpreting the present and preserving memory, opening up new visions of the future for both creators and audiences alike.

Karel Och, artistic director of Karlovy Vary IFF



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CRYSTAL GLOBE COMPETITION

3 nedelje posle / 3 Weeks After

Director: Miroslav Terzić

Serbia, Bulgaria, 2026, 94 min, World premiere

A group of high school students set off for a class trip to Bulgaria. When their bus breaks down, they find themselves stranded in an old hotel near the mountains. The atmosphere grows tense when the quiet and withdrawn Zoza decides to talk about his best friend's recent suicide. Why did Andrij choose to end his life? And wouldn't it have been better if Zoza hadn't brought it up? Like his previous outings, Serbian director Miroslav Terzić's third film is characterized by an overwhelming, meticulously crafted sense of tension. *3 Weeks After* takes us into the vulnerable world of adolescents, where innocence is mixed with cruelty. It also exposes the mechanisms of bullying in a society that closes its eyes at decisive moments when looking away is the last thing we should do.

Cherni pari za beli noshti / Black Money for White Nights

Director: Kristina Grozeva, Petar Valchanov

Bulgaria, Greece, 2025, 94 min, World premiere

After years of saving money from the small bribes they collect, sixty-year-old Marina and her husband Gosha from Bulgaria are preparing for their dream trip to St. Petersburg to witness the White Nights. But when Russia invades Ukraine and the travel agency vanishes with all their savings, the couple's dream collapses along with their illusion of control over their moral principles and the relationship they have with each other. Kristina Grozeva and Petar Valchanov, recipients of the 2019 Crystal Globe, return to Karlovy Vary with a tragicomic portrait of a generation forced to reassess its values as they question everything that is considered black and white in post-Soviet society.

Chica Checa

Director: Šimon Holý

Czech Republic, France, Slovak Republic, 2026, 96 min, World premiere

Following a trilogy of low-budget films, two of which (*Mirrors in the Dark* and *And Then There Was Love...*) were screened in Karlovy Vary, Šimon Holý returns with the international co-production *Chica Checa*. Once again, the story revolves around a female protagonist: here, the widowed village mail carrier Zdena (Pavla Tomicová), who tries to fulfill the last wish of her ailing mother. A series of unexpected events brings her closer to her son Lukáš (Jan Cina) and awakens in her a longing for a different life. Holý once again confirms his talent for observation and his ability to create a vibrant portrait of his



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characters' inner conflicts, all while giving Tomicová ample space to fully express her acting abilities.

Cinco años, cuatro meses / Five Years, Four Months

Director: Esteban Hoyos García, Juan Miguel Gelacio Ramírez
Colombia, USA, 2025, 83 min, World premiere

Not only did Martha lose her oldest son, but to this day she doesn't know what happened to him or his remains. After years of searching in vain, she meets Sandra, who offers her one more possibility, perhaps her last hope: to set out for a remote place where the line between the living and the dead is blurred. The directorial duo of Juan Miguel Gelacio and Esteban Hoyos García gives voice to Colombian women who, after their children's disappearance, took the search into their own hands. The film's subdued, focused narrative calls attention to one of the most painful consequences of the country's long-lasting armed conflict while portraying the search for peace and reconciliation in a place that has never witnessed a farewell.

Detrás de la lluvia / Behind the Rain

Director: Valeria Sarmiento
Chile, 2026, 97 min, World premiere

In all her films, director and editor Valeria Sarmiento has questioned the relationship between memory and the unconscious. Is it better to remain silent, hiding secrets so that things do not change (as in *Secretos*, 2008), or to seek true access to the most painful memories (as in *Huellas*, 2023)? In *Behind the Rain*, Sarmiento reflects on the very concept of repression. Sofía has just finished her psychology studies in Valparaíso (the city where Sarmiento was born) and returns to her hometown, Valdivia. Her return coincides with the discovery of a young girl's body, which awakens in her memories of childhood sexual abuse. Like a scratched film that looks like rain, Sofía must decide whether to stop the memory from resurfacing or to look beyond the rain, beyond the buried fears of an entire country.

Gæsten / The Guest

Director: Mads Mengel
Denmark, 2026, 99 min, World premiere

Fresh parents Karl and Emilie are looking forward to a weekend at a seaside hotel, where they plan to announce their child's name and thus officially welcome him to the world. A day before the celebration, however, Karl's mother Vibeke shows up, with whom he hasn't spoken in several years. Building on the tradition of contemporary Nordic cinema, debut filmmaker Mads Mengel tells the intimate story of a family that threatens to fall apart when old wounds are opened up. What begins as a close-knit celebration turns into an



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uncomfortable confrontation with an unresolved past that won't let the film's protagonists forget who they really are – or where they come from.

A Happy Family

Director: Jan-Eric Mack

Switzerland, 2026, 120 min, World premiere

Niki works two jobs, but the little money she earns is barely enough to cover the living expenses for her and her two young children. One day, when the children are left unsupervised, they accidentally set the kitchen on fire, and so the Swiss authorities place them with a foster family on the other side of the country. Though forbidden from contacting her children, Niki decides to track them down. Based on a true story, the first Swiss film to be screened in Karlovy Vary's Crystal Globe Competition draws its strength from a determined yet ambivalent protagonist whose actions shed light on a rigid social system while reflecting the conflict between parental instinct and personal responsibility. Adding to the film's strong dramatic arc is an exceptionally compelling performance by Anna Schinz.

Hijamat

Director: Nader Saeivar

Germany, 2026, 103 min, World premiere

Fifty-year-old Murad's life is shaken to the core when he learns that his younger brother is gay. Murad would like to support his brother, but their traditional Muslim family is against it. As a result, he finds himself subjected to pressures from all sides – from his father, who has close ties to the local imam, and from his brother's circle of friends as well. He would like to help everyone, but as he slowly falls into a spiral of conflicts and mounting difficulties, he finds that he, too, is in need of help. Another integral part of this family drama is the theme of migration and dialogue – not just between different religions, but within communities themselves. For his fourth feature film, director Nader Saeivar collaborated with Jafar Panahí, who contributed as producer and editor.

The Lion at My Back

Director: Tonia Mishiali

Cyprus, Luxembourg, Greece, 2026, 106 min, World premiere

Mariama, an asylum-seeker from Senegal, has just turned eighteen. Stella, at first glance a withdrawn woman in her forties, has recently decided to break free from the clutches of addiction and to give her life a fresh start. In their attempt at finding their place in a world where nothing comes for free, the two women meet and form an unexpectedly strong bond. Following her 2018 debut *Pause*, Cyprian producer and director Tonia Mishiali



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returns to Karlovy Vary with a vivid, heartwarming, and hopeful story about how family bonds and motherly love can be found in the most unlikely places.

Pipes

Director: Karim Kassem

Lebanon, 2025, 112 min, World premiere

Although Hassan has retired from his job at the water authority, his neighbors are used to him always helping them out. This time, the situation is serious: The entire town is without water, and tensions are rising among the population with every passing day. Hassan would like to help them all, but he also needs time to mourn a friend who recently died under unclear circumstances. Lebanese director Karim Kassem skillfully works with various cinematic genres to create an elegant double portrait of an aging man and the town of which he has been a part all his life. He does so with a sense of nostalgia, subtle humor, and an almost meditative melancholy, mixed with a touch of detective work.

Prameň / Only Beautiful Things to Look At

Director: Ivan Ostrochovský

Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, Hungary, 2026, 90 min, World premiere

The film is set in the mid-1980s, when the state used its laws to continually influence the most intimate facets of its citizens' lives. Ingrid (Aňa Geislerová) is an ambitious doctor, whose mission is to bring children into the world, to terminate unwanted pregnancies, and to participate in the sterilisation of Romany women. The melancholy woman has greater misgivings about her private situation than she does about her professional life, that is, until she is caught "off guard" by a new friendship with a charismatic Romany orderly. Spontaneous Agáta presents to Ingrid the human contours of a national minority reduced by the communists to a demographic problem. Ostrochovský's beguiling drama returns to a hitherto unresolved issue of Czechoslovak history, where the option of having children was determined by the state.

Thit-thee Khu / Fruit Gathering

Director: Aung Phyoe

Myanmar, France, Czech Republic, 2026, 97 min, World premiere

Seen through the eyes of two young women, life in contemporary Myanmar can look quite oppressive. Working at a textile factory in industrial Yangon, they face exhausting work, social repression, and economic uncertainty. Although the grueling pace of everyday life stifles opportunities for human connection, both women continue to dream of intimacy and escape. When they grow closer, they set in motion the previously silenced fibers of their own emotions. Aung Phyoe's long-anticipated directorial debut unfolds in shades of silence, subtle gestures, and unspoken wishes. In a captivating rhythm that oscillates



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between tenderness and harshness, the film explores how women's desires survive in a country where intimacy and love between women remain socially unacceptable.

PROXIMA COMPETITION

33 krokov / 33 Steps

Director: Anna Domček, Šimon Domček

Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, 2026, 71 min, World premiere

Thirteen years after Milan Daniel suffered a serious head injury in a racially motivated attack, his assailant is set to be released. What feelings does this moment awaken in a traumatized man who, though he survived, will forever suffer the consequences of that fateful day? Straddling the line between fiction and documentary, the feature debut by Slovak directors Šimon and Anna Domček is an exceptionally cohesive mosaic of fragmentary pieces of everyday life, memories, dreams, and subjective perceptions. Besides exploring the experience of someone seeking to escape the shadows of the past – shadows that weigh heavily on future generations as well – the film also takes an unusual approach to the subject of racial intolerance.

Camionero / Truck Driver

Director: Francisco Marise

Spain, Argentina, 2026, 84 min, World premiere

One would think that every road movie needs its central setting: the road. But Francisco Marise's hybrid film senses that every trip, road, or journey requires us to stop every now and then. It is just such moments, when the film's Argentinian truck driver protagonists turn off their engines and stop driving, that form this film's starting point. Interweaving intimate observations with subtle glimpses of transcendence, *Truck Driver* paints a collective portrait of people who share a strange dimension of time within the silence of the asphalt wilderness – at motels, on the side of the road, and in tire shops, savoring the pure joy of the present moment while longing for loved ones far away.

Contra la Naturaleza / Against Nature

Director: Axel Bertha

Mexico, 2026, 86 min, World premiere

After many years away, Jonás returns to the countryside to start work as a stonemason. In a place marked by the harshness of life, he opens himself up to something intangible – a



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force that permeates the landscape, bodies, and time itself. An evocatively told story of a silent man whose enigmatic nature stems from the dark side of humanity and from his contact with the sacred, the film moves along the boundary between the physical and the spiritual. Thanks to compelling sound design, a hypnotic visual style, and a rejection of traditional storytelling, Axel Bertha delivers an absorbing cinematic experience that explores human cruelty as part of a cycle of destruction from which humanity has yet to find a way out.

Enas olokliros anthropos schedon / A Whole Person Almost

Director: Efthimis Kosemund-Sanidis

Greece, Bulgaria, Germany, Cyprus, Romania, 2025, 111 min, World premiere

Ilias arrives on a remote island to claim his late father's inheritance. But the longer he is forced to stay on the island, the more his initial indifference begins to fade. As he interacts with the local community, he uncovers his father's past and, with it, a portrait of a man which differs significantly from his own memories. His gradually awakening emotions are intensified by his encounter with the local girl Kalliopi, by sudden spasms in his body, and by mysterious power outages that affect the entire island. This feature-length debut paints a tender picture of a world that is both real and mystical – a place where, despite distant echoes foreboding the possible end of the world, we encounter love, reconciliation, and unexpected understanding.

Homo Sive Natura

Director: Giovanni C. Lorusso

Italy, 2026, 115 min, World premiere

In the remote forests of eastern Cambodia lives a community of indigenous inhabitants. An unnamed forty-year-old businessman arrives with seemingly selfless intentions: he claims he is merely a tourist seeking to discover the life of his "brothers". In actuality, however, he is gathering information for the possible expropriation of their land. Italian globetrotter Giovanni C. Lorusso lives up to his reputation as a filmmaker balancing on the line between fiction and documentary. Through unique locations, mesmerizing camera work, and immersive sound design, he captures the slow inner transformation of his protagonist along with the rich cultural and spiritual life of a community facing a modern form of colonialism.

The Ink-Stained Hand and the Missing Thumb

Director: Yashasvi Juyal

India, 2026, 120 min, World premiere

If the world had an edge, it might look something like the remote corner of northern India where Santosh and Rajji live, collecting highway tolls in dilapidated booths. Work and



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endless waiting are blurred together. Bound by the power of love, but also by the need to constantly move around in search of work, they dream of the happiness that awaits them in a new place... until one day, a sudden tragedy turns their lives upside down. As melancholic as it is tender, *The Ink-Stained Hand and the Missing Thumb* is the story of everyone who has suffered an unexpected loss. It is a heartfelt romance bordering on magical realism, a fleeting memory of a loved one who has vanished into the past, never to return.

Mein Freund der Pornostar / My Friend the Porn Star

Director: Rosa Friedrich

Austria, 2026, 94 min, World premiere

Rosa – the director Rosa Friedrich herself – was never that interested in porn, until her friend Timo expresses a wish to star in an erotic film. So Rosa agrees to help him get his project off the ground. However, the closer it gets to the shooting date, the more Timo feels embarrassed and doubtful about having involved himself in the first place. His face is ultimately replaced with the help of AI, and Rosa, together with a dominatrix, three trans women, a food-porn creator, a sex coach and other protagonists, continues with the film. A playful look at the kind of porn that can be worlds apart from the depersonalised, omnipresent industry, the kind which gives rise to emotions, misgivings and the uniqueness of each, individual body and experience.

Milovník, nie bojovník / Lover, Not a Fighter

Director: Martina Buchelová

Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, 2026, 108 min, World premiere

Andrej wants to stop causing trouble and start behaving himself. To spend the summer helping his grandmother, and mainly not to drink alcohol – because when he drinks, he does things like climb a tree from which he can't get down anymore. But his plan doesn't count on him meeting and falling in love (or something) with Míša. And sometimes love is worth fighting for, even if it's alongside your boring cousin Peter. A summer full of challenges can begin! This debut by Slovak director Martina Buchelová is a celebration of cinematic freedom that is humorous and inventive in terms of both style and narrative. Come enjoy summer like when we were teenagers.

Paris Paris

Director: Isabelle Tollenaere

Belgium, 2026, 78 min, World premiere

An allegory of searching, loss, displacement, and the discovery of new meanings and commonalities. Three men – Yi-En from China, Junior from Congo, and Hamzah from Palestine – share a spartan apartment in a seemingly abandoned building in Paris.



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Besides this joint living arrangement, the group is bound together by their shared experience of life in exile and the fleeting nature of their possessions, relationships, and sense of home. Director Isabelle Tollenaere's fiction film debut is set in one of Europe's great cities and in a replica of Paris built in China – a metaphor for the immigrants' old dream of life in a new home and its gradual transformation into a new dream about their old home.

Rain Catcher

Director: Michele Fiascaris

Italy, United Kingdom, 2026, 109 min, World premiere

On dark and rainy nights, Miles creeps the streets of London, photographing the city's hidden corners and the people that populate them. The products of these voyeuristic forays, published under the pseudonym Rain Catcher, earn him great renown on social networks and among high culture. With time, however, he starts to notice the same mysterious woman in his photographs – a woman who follows his every move and slowly begins to threaten all his work and his very existence. Michele Fiascaris's suggestive feature-film debut uses his film's gloomy atmosphere to explore the city's underbelly – and the disquieting human mind. The audience is invited to immerse themselves in Miles's paranoia as he uncovers reality one step at a time.

Shokyakuro / Incinerator

Director: Shuntaro Uchida

Japan, 2026, 97 min, World premiere

Ten-year-old Kozue, who definitely is not one of the popular kids at school, secretly spends her time tossing various objects into the school's incinerator. When university student Jinta comes to her classroom and invites the children to a shadow play performance, something awakens inside Kozue, and her path toward adulthood begins. In this poetic tale based on a short story by Japanese author Kaori Ekuni (nicknamed the "female Murakami"), sunny summer days mix languidly with scenes of everyday life to reveal a silent yet unsettling confrontation with a world that often seems impenetrable to children's eyes. Understanding family relationships, mortality, and one's own emotions is significantly more complicated than turning things into ash.

Sitni lopovi / Petty Thieves

Director: Mate Ugrin

Croatia, Germany, France, 2026, 106 min, World premiere

It's summer, and the tourist season on the Adriatic is in full swing. Loner Rio earns extra money as a kitchen help at a local hotel, but he also commits minor thefts at the expense of foreign visitors. When the young Serbian worker Andrea learns about his thieving, the



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two come to an unusual agreement: they will steal together and share the profits. But this pragmatic alliance grows into an unexpected closeness. Croatian filmmaker Mate Ugrin's feature debut follows on from several distinctive Balkan films from recent years. Through clever metaphors, subtly elliptical editing, and an evocative use of atmosphere, *Petty Thieves* paints a portrait of solidarity among people who never stop dreaming of a better future in the face of a tourism industry that pushes them to the margins.

SPECIAL SCREENINGS

Bára Basiková / Bára - Diary of a Rockstar

Director: Helena Třeščíková

Czech Republic, 2026, 97 min, World premiere

Bára Basiková is an icon of Czech rock and other music genres. To what extent can her public, media-distorted image differ from the person she really is? The answer comes in the form of the latest long-term documentary study from Helena Třeščíková, whose empathy, coupled with admirable self-reflection and openness on the part of the protagonist, gives rise to a fascinating film portrait: over the course of fifty years we follow a woman who demonstrates remarkable strength as she faces the challenges of both her professional and private lives.

Dvě deci tuše / A Pint of Ink

Director: Ester Geislerová

Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, 2026, 83 min, World premiere

If the quality of a biographical documentary is measured by its ability to instill in viewers previously unfamiliar with the subject the desire to get to know that person and to spend time within their "magnetic field," then *A Pint of Ink* is a successful film. Another reason is that Ester Geislerová, daughter of the Japanologist, translator, journalist, educator, and calligrapher Petr Geisler (1949–2009), has managed to capture her father's exceptional status in late-twentieth-century Czech culture (and more) without ever losing sight of the intimate, familial, joyful, and painful dimensions. Through photographs, home videos, letters, and personal recollections, she composes a portrait of a charismatic charmer who remained mysteriously elusive even to his closest family.

Kdyby se holubi proměnili ve zlato / If Pigeons Turned to Gold

Director: Pepa Lubojacki

Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, 2026, 110 min



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Not just the Best Documentary Award at this year's Berlinale turned pigeons to gold for modern Czech documentary film. Have you ever mourned someone who is still alive? Shooting on her iPhone, director Pepa Lubojacki tries to understand why her beloved older brother and two cousins live unhoused while struggling with addiction. Avoiding the siren song of sentimentality and shot in a DIY aesthetic enriched by the creative use of stylized remembrances, graphic interventions, and artificial intelligence, this disarmingly personal film explores family history, the causes and consequences of addiction, and the limits of personal integrity. What is the right expression of love – to save, or to let go?

Khaneh doost injust / The Friend's House is Here

Director: Maryam Ataei, Hossein Keshavarz
Iran, USA, 2025, 96 min, International premiere

Pari and Hanna, roommates and friends, live in modern-day Tehran. Pari is a curator and director of an independent theatre group; Hanna is a dancer, who wants to get out of Iran as soon as possible. The situation of both women becomes more complicated, but their friendship is strong in the face of political oppression. *The Friend's House is Here* is a rewarding cinematic experience, conveying a sense of freedom and hope, even though it originated under the exact opposite conditions. Just a few days after the June War in Iran, the crew, headed by directing duo Hossein Keshavarz and Maryam Ataei, took to the streets of Tehran to make a film about a generation that no longer wants to live according to imposed rules and is striving to achieve one of the fundamental human rights, the right to freedom of artistic expression.

Learning To Breathe Underwater

Director: Rebekah Fortune
United Kingdom, Netherlands, Ireland, 2026, 95 min, World premiere

Eight-year-old Leo lives with his dad and a giant shark, which crashed through the roof of their home. Yes, you read that correctly. The shark is Leo's best friend, to whom he can confide all his secrets. He can't really talk to his dad; he must be missing mum, who's been gone five years now. Then Anya the au pair bursts into their lives, and their world suddenly changes. It's more cheerful and Leo discovers that the metal shark doesn't have to be his only friend. An enchanting film for parents and children about how to talk together and how to grieve together. About how the world of adults is sometimes hard to understand, and how children's opinions really should be taken seriously. And, above all, it's about learning how to breathe again.

Město otců / City of Fathers

Director: Zdeněk Tyc
Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Poland, 2026, 100 min, World premiere



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Distinctive filmmaker Zdeněk Tyc offers up a story about a father and son, who have nothing in common except their first name, Richard, and an apartment on a housing estate. The burly, good-natured, 30-something factory worker listens to heavy metal and occasionally lets his girlfriend into his life. The frail, retired teacher, who raised the boy after his mother's departure, is the embodiment of care and understanding. However, their tranquil, shared reality, which embraces both the hardcore band Našrot and Bergman's *Cries and Whispers*, is disrupted by the sudden death of the mother. Young Richard sets out on a peculiar initiation journey with bizarre encounters and moments of unexpected enlightenment. Tyc plunges headfirst into existential themes with the dependable support of a stellar cast headed by Tomáš Vravník and Vladimír Javorský.

Mistryně / Everything As It Should Be

Director: Bohdan Karásek

Czech Republic, 2026, 101 min, World premiere

Monika, a doctor, is happy in her relationship and is expecting a child. She still gets along well with her former husband Petr, and so she decides to tell him about her pregnancy in person. The two of them had had difficulties conceiving. Their afternoon meeting for coffee extends into evening, so they have plenty of time to talk – about what might have been, and also about what might be. Director, screenwriter, and editor Bohdan Karásek pays homage to mumblecore, a genre founded on conversations. The conversation between the two main characters, excellently portrayed by Marie Švestková and Jiří Havelka, opens numerous questions faced by more than a few men and women in middle age.

Morten

Director: Ivan Pavljutskov

Estonia, Lithuania, 2026, 101 min, World premiere

Youthful fragility and self-discovery are frequent motifs of the contemporary coming-of-age genre, but few filmmakers also address social issues – and do so in a poetic manner or with a spiritual dimension. Estonian director Ivan Pavljutskov is definitely among the latter group. In his feature debut, fifteen-year-old photographer Morten finds himself caught between two worlds – between two girls, between nature and civilization, between everyday reality and the mystical, between what is right and what others want. As it explores the depths of the Baltic forests and of a young boy's soul, *Morten* will charm viewers of all ages with its warmth and understanding for all its characters.

Robert Richardson: The White Devil

Director: Jana Hojdová

Czech Republic, USA, 2026, 105 min, World premiere



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Jana Hojdová, a former cinematography student at Prague's FAMU, sent an email in order to get a contact for Robert Richardson, one of the most distinguished cinematographers on the scene today. It must have been a great surprise for her to receive a reply from the man himself. What started as a student exercise and master's degree project soon evolved into a creative partnership and personal friendship. The more improbable the film's premise seems, the more fascinated we become by its portrait of a distinctive and uncompromising artist, three-time Academy Award winner, and acclaimed collaborator of such directors as Oliver Stone, Martin Scorsese and Quentin Tarantino.

The Story of Documentary Film - 1980s

Director: Mark Cousins

United Kingdom, 2026, 120 min, World premiere

The Karlovy Vary IFF's nearly fifteen-year friendship with Mark Cousins, whose stunning film essays have impressed countless viewers over the years, is firmly rooted in a shared passion for the world of cinema and in the festival's sincere admiration for this inimitable Northern Irish filmmaker, writer, curator, film critic and traveller. After what are now legendary series *The Story of Film: An Odyssey* and *Women Make Film*, the magnetic storyteller brings us another saga, this time devoted to documentary film. Of his sixteen hour-long chapters embracing the entire history of the tenth muse, Cousins selected for Karlovy Vary the part that centres on the 1980s, an era that was fundamental for our region from a socio-political perspective.

To Die to Live

Director: Yuliia Hontaruk

Ukraine, Latvia, Slovak Republic, 2026, 116 min, World premiere

In 2014, Shakhta, Dancer, and Potter volunteered for the army in order to fight in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict in eastern Ukraine. Although the horrible things they experienced during two years on the front accompany them for every second of their existence, they try to return to civilian life. But the Russian invasion in 2022 forces them to again confront the war. Filmed over the course of twelve years, this documentary uses a fragmentary cinematic language to evoke the trauma experienced by its protagonists, and thus to help us imagine the unimaginable: how to accept that some live while others die, and that – faced with one's own death – what remains above all is the desire to live.

Vyvolení / Gregorius, the Chosen One

Director: Tomasz Mielnik

Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, 2026, 90 min, World premiere

"Puppeteer, tell us a story we don't know yet!" the audience calls out to a traveling thespian. And so he starts to recount a story about a boy born of the forbidden love



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between brother and sister, who had many adventures, who spent seventeen years tied to a rock, and who perhaps was also... a hedgehog? But that's not as important as how, after overcoming all these obstacles, he ended up becoming the pope. Young Gregorius (excellently portrayed by Jan František Uher) is a charming mix of naivete and determination, and it is a pure joy to watch his wanderings through mythical lands. Director Tomasz Mielnik's wild, absurd comedy is based on the final novel by Thomas Mann.

Zpráva pro Minervu 2 / A Report for Minerva 2

Director: Miroslav Krobot, Lubomír Smékal

Czech Republic, 2026, 69 min, World premiere

The lives of a mismatched group of guests and employees become entangled in a run-down hotel. Some have come in search of peace and a brief escape from their daily routine, while others long for change – or even love. A lonely clarinetist crosses paths with a young man looking for a romantic adventure, an unhappily married couple, an idiosyncratic hotel staff member, and also an alien sent from the planet Minerva 2 in order to report on the state of Earth. A mosaic of fourteen interwoven stories emerges through fleeting situations, awkward moments, interior monologues, and quiet observations. This experimental film by Miroslav Krobot and Lubomír Smékal is loosely based on the stage production of the same name by the S 23 Theatre Company, whose non-professional actors put together stage performances based on the dialogical acting method.



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The Juries of the 60th Karlovy Vary IFF

CRYSTAL GLOBE JURY

Justin Chang

Justin Chang is a film critic at *The New Yorker* and NPR's "Fresh Air". He won the 2024 Pulitzer Prize for criticism for his writing at the *Los Angeles Times*, where he spent eight years as a critic. Previously, he was the chief film critic at *Variety*. Chang serves as chair of the National Society of Film Critics and secretary of the Los Angeles Film Critics Association, and is a member of the New York Film Festival selection committee. He teaches at the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California.

Amanda Nell Eu

Amanda Nell Eu is a filmmaker based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Her debut feature film *Tiger Stripes* was the Grand Prize winner of Semaine de la Critique in the 2023 Cannes Film Festival. The film was also the official Malaysian submission for the Academy Awards in 2023. Amanda graduated from the London Film School with an MA in Filmmaking and is an alumna of Berlinale Talents, Tokyo Talents and Locarno Filmmakers Academy. She has also served as a jury member at various film festivals and mentored film workshops internationally.

Pavel Rejholec

Pavel Rejholec is a Czech sound designer, producer, composer, and educator. He graduated from the Department of Sound Design at FAMU, where he has been head of the department since 2011. Throughout his career, he has worked as a sound designer on more than fifty Czech and international feature films. Since 2003, he has served as the managing director of the Soundsquare studio. He has won eight Czech Lion Awards for Best Sound, for instance, for the films *Zátopek* or *The Painted Bird*. As a dubbing supervisor, he collaborated with Lucasfilm on *Star Wars: Episode II* and *Star Wars: Episode III*. He is a member of the Motion Picture Sound Editors and serves on the board of the Czech Film and Television Academy.

Nadia Turincev

Nadia Turincev was born in Moscow, grew up in Paris and studied cultural anthropology. She started off in the movie industry aged 16, making sandwiches for Marcello



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Mastroianni. In 2007, she co-founded Rouge International, producing 25+ films (*Fix ME*, *Mimosas*, *Raw*, Oscar-nominated *The Insult* and *Faces Places*). In 2019 she left Rouge and created Easy Riders Films (*Mariupolis 2*, *Crossing*, *Only Rebels Win*) with Omar El Kadi. She recently opened her solo company Sento Films to produce "unrealizable" films.

Eskil Vogt

Eskil Vogt is a two-time Oscar-nominated Norwegian filmmaker. His directing debut *Blind* (2014) premiered at the Sundance FF where it won the Screenwriting Award. His sophomore effort, *The Innocents* (2021), premiered at the Cannes FF before going on to win more than 20 international awards. Eskil also collaborates closely with Joachim Trier, co-writing all of Trier's features since *Reprise* (2006), including *Oslo, August 31st* (2011), *The Worst Person in the World* (2021) and *Sentimental Value* (2025). Vogt is a directing graduate from La Fémis, the French national film school.

PROXIMA JURY

Estrella Araiza

Estrella Araiza is the General Director of the Guadalajara International Film Festival (FICG) and Cineteca UDG, where she has focused on strengthening the presence of Mexican and Latin American cinema across both institutions. Her professional career includes experience as Director of Industry and Market at FICG, as well as work as a sales agent, academic, and film distributor in Mexico. She began her career in international film distribution in 2005, and in 2012 founded her own company, Vendo Cine. Since 2018, she has overseen FICG's special projects, including the acclaimed exhibition *Guillermo del Toro: At Home with My Monsters* in Guadalajara.

Dirk Decker

Dirk Decker is a producer and co-founder of Hamburg-based Tamtam Film. Through Tamtam, he works with emerging talents and supports distinctive auteur cinema across fiction and documentary. His productions have premiered at major international festivals. Recent titles include *Rain Fell on the Nothing New* (Karlovy Vary 2025), *Short Summer* (Venice 2025, Lion of the Future) and *Trial of Hein* (Berlinale 2026, Teddy Jury Award).

Jakub Felcman

Jakub Felcman is a Czech screenwriter, festival organizer, film critic, creative producer, director, and qualified plumber. He studied film at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University,



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and FAMU, published interviews and film analyses (for Cinepur), programmed film festivals, and co-founded two of them (Ostrava Kamera Oko, Marienbad). As a script editor he collaborated on films by Jan Němec, Petr Václav, Radu Jude, and Corneliu Porumboiu. Cinemas have screened several films that he co-wrote or produced (such as *A Night Too Young*, *A Certain Kind of Silence*, and *The Wolf from Royal Vineyard Street*).

Devika Girish

Devika Girish is editor at *Film Comment* magazine and a Talks programmer at the New York Film Festival. Her writing also appears in *The New York Times*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *Sight & Sound*, The Criterion Collection, and others, and she has programmed series and festivals for the Criterion Channel, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Film at Lincoln Center, the Mumbai Film Festival, the Berlin Critics' Week, and more. Devika has been invited to juries at CPH:DOX, the Locarno Film Festival, SEMINCI, and Visions du Réel.

Marija Kavtaradze

Marija Kavtaradze is a Lithuanian director and screenwriter. Graduating from the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre in 2014, she made her feature debut with *Summer Survivors* in 2018, which premiered at the Toronto IFF, followed by *Slow* (2023), which earned her a Directing Award at the Sundance Film Festival and had its European premiere at KVIFF in 2023. Marija works as a screenwriter on shorts and feature films, including *The Visitor* (dir. Vytautas Katkus, KVIFF 2025), *Runner* (dir. Andrius Blaževičius, KVIFF 2021), the animated TV series *BFF* for kids, and others.