

**STRAND
RELEASING**

presents

CHARLATAN

A FILM BY
AGNIESZKA HOLLAND

Starring Ivan Trojan

PRESS NOTES

*OFFICIAL SELECTION
Berlin International Film Festival*

Country of Origin: Czech Republic in co-production with Ireland, Poland and Slovakia
Format: DCP/1.78/Color
Sound: 5.1 Surround
Running Time: 118 minutes
Genre: Historical Drama
Not Rated
Czech and German with English Subtitles

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LOGLINE

Based on the true story of Czech healer Jan Mikolášek who dedicated his life to treating the sick using medicinal plants. Throughout the war and turmoil of the 20th century he has to choose between his calling and his conscience.

SYNOPSIS

Few true stories tread the thin line between good and evil as precariously as that of Jan Mikolášek, a 20th century Czech herbal healer whose great success masked the grimmest of secrets. Mikolášek won fame and fortune treating celebrities of the interwar, Nazi, and Communist eras with his uncanny knack for “urinary diagnosis”. But his passion for healing welled up from the same source as a lust for cruelty, sadism, and an incapacity for love that only one person could ever quell – his assistant, František. As a show trial threatens to pry open these secrets and undo him, Jan’s dichotomies are put to a final test, with the fate of his life’s only love in the balance. A personal tale as replete with twists as the century itself, and a reflection on the price one pays for single-mindedly following one’s calling.

DIRECTOR’S NOTE

Jan Mikolášek was a very famous healer, an unusual medicine man, who was using unorthodox methods of diagnosis and treatment. Those special skills made him not only well known but also rich. In Czechoslovakia before World War II, he became some kind of institution and even during the German occupation he was able to preserve his status by healing high Nazi officials.

He was sure that it would not be different after the war. The communists who took power were also humans. And humans fell sick, felt hopeless and needed the doctor; a special kind of a doctor as well, when others cannot help. But the situation changed when his main Stalinist protector died, and the regime decided to destroy him. He was too different, too rich, and too independent.

Charlatan tells the story of Mikolášek’s rise and fall. Of his moral fall and of his constant fight with the darkness inside him. It is the story of the mystery of a man, of the mystery of his special gift, of the prize he was ready to pay for it; the story of the paradox of strength and weakness, of love and hate.

To tell this story with an epic scope - dozens of years, three different regimes, two World Wars – but one, that feels, at the same time, extremely intimate, I tried to find a sensual and minimalistic language. Static. Quiet. Spare dialogues. Hidden emotions. Extremely subjective passage of time: years are passing in few minutes, minutes are extended, feel like eternity.

I tried to show a human soul without entering into the depth of psychological analyses, express interiority through behavior. The faces of actors, the tension between the characters, their constant efforts to pass through the armors of each other are what drives the story forward; the background, the big History of the twentieth century is reflected in their fate.

I was fortunate to have a wonderful group of people to make this film: cinematographer Martin Strba, production designer Milan Bycek, Editor Pavel Hrdlicka, composer Antoni Komasa Lazarkiewicz, actor Ivan Trojan, all of whom I have worked with previously on the miniseries *Burning Bush*. They are an extremely creative, original, and courageous team, and they had a large part in finding a way to tell this story in a strong, personal way; to find images which I hope will stay with the audience long after the screening.

AGNIESZKA HOLLAND | BIOGRAPHY

Agnieszka Holland was born in Warsaw and has directed and/or written over thirty films in her illustrious career. She studied directing at FAMU, the Prague Film and TV School of Academy of Performing Arts and started her professional life as assistant director for Krzysztof Zanussi and Andrzej Wajda, for whose films she wrote several screenplays. Her directorial debut *Provincial Actors* was honored by the International Critics' Jury in its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival 1979.

Her film *Fever (Gorączka)* won the Polish Film Festival as well as a Silver Bear as Best Actress for Barbara Grabowska in the 1981 Berlinale Competition. Also in 1981, and shortly before the declaration of martial law in Poland, Holland moved to Paris. Her first film after emigrating, *Bitter Harvest*, was nominated for an Academy Award as Best Film in a Foreign Language in 1986. *Europa Europa* (1990) won a Golden Globe and a second Oscar nomination, this time for best original screenplay. In 1993, Holland made the first of many films in the US with *The Secret Garden*, produced by Francis Ford Coppola. *In Darkness* (2011) earned her a third Oscar nomination. Her last two feature films, *Pokot* (2017, winner of the Silver Bear for Innovation in the Art of Cinema) and *Mr. Jones* (2019), were both selected for the Berlinale Competition. Holland has also directed many episodes of renowned TV-Series such as *The Wire*, *The Killing*, *House of Cards* and *The First*.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

IVAN TROJAN | JAN MIKOLÁŠEK

A prolific Czech theatre, film, television and dubbing actor, Ivan holds a record number of four Czech Lion awards for the best performance in the leading role and two for supporting actor. He studied at the DAMU theatre faculty in Prague. In 1988 he commenced the military service in the Army Art Ensemble, where he signed a petition for the release of Václav Havel from prison. Although his career started on stage, where his standing as one of the most prominent theatre actors (and recently directors) of his generation is proven by a plethora of important awards, for the last 20 years he has built a career as a major force in Czech film and television.

Trojan's first significant film role was a doctor in film *Loners (Samotáři, 2000)*, directed by David Ondříček, for which he was nominated for Czech Lion in the best actor category. He received the prize again two years later for his role in *The Brats (Smradi, 2002)*. In the same year, he won the Czech Lion for the best performance as supporting actor in the dramedy *I Have to Seduce You (Musím tě svést, 2002)*. Another Czech Lion Award followed the next year with *One Hand Doesn't Clap (Jedna ruka netleská, 2003)*. Ivan also acts for his directing brother Ondřej, for example in the historical drama adaptation *Želary* (2003), nominated for the Oscar in the best foreign language film category. Ivan Trojan is the prizewinner of the 2007 TýTý (audience survey for the best TV faces). In 2013 he received the Golden Nymph award for supporting actor for his role in the three-part TV drama *Burning Bush* at the International Film Festival in Monte Carlo. His most recent Czech Lion award is for his lead role in *Nowhere in Moravia (Díra u Hanušovic, 2014)*.

JOSEF TROJAN | YOUNG JAN MIKOLÁŠEK

The second of Ivan Trojan's four sons, Josef is a Czech theatre and film actor. As a child, he played in the films *Angel of the Lord (Anděl Páně, 2005)* and *Revival (2013)*. He played his first prominent roles in the films *Price for Happiness (Cena za štěstí, 2019)* and *Abstinent (2019)* and also starred in the series *The Spot (Skvrna, 2019)* and *The World Under Your Head (Svět pod hlavou, 2017)*. In the film *Charlatan* he plays a younger version of Jan Mikolášek in turn played by his father, Ivan Trojan.

JURAJ LOJ | FRANTIŠEK PALKO

Juraj Loj studied at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava (VŠMÚ) and had his first engagement in the theater in Nitra. In his native Slovakia, he became famous for his roles in the series *Stormy Wine (Búrlivé víno, 2012)*, *Doctors (Doktori, 2018)*, *Behind the Glass (Za sklom, 2016)*, *Nurses (Sestričky, 2018)*, *Immortals (Nesmrtelní, 2010)*, *City of Shadows (Mesto tieňov, 2008)*, *Surgery in the Pink (Ordinace v růžové zahradě, 2005)* and the mystery thriller *The Rift (Trhlina, 2019)*. The role of František's assistant marks his debut in a starring role in a feature film.

CAST

Jan Mikolášek
Young Jan Mikolášek
Mülbacherová
Zlatohlávek
Interrogator

Ivan Trojan
Josef Trojan
Jaroslava Pokorná
Jiří Černý
Miroslav Hanuš

CREW

Director
Screenplay
Cinematography
Editing
Production Designer
Costume Designer
Sound Designer
Composer
Make-up
Executive Producer

Agnieszka Holland
Marek Epstein
Martin Strba
Pavel Hrdlicka
Milan Bycek
Katarína Štrbová-Bieliková
Radim Hladik jr.
Antoni Komasa-Lazarkiewicz
René Stejskal, Gabriela Poláková
Aleš Týbl

Production company
Produced by
In Co-Production with

Marlene Film Production
Šárka Cimblová, Kevan Van Thompson
Czech Television, Barrandov Studio, Rozhlas A Televízia
Slovenska, Certicon, Vladimír and Taťána Maříkovi,
Magic Lab, Studio Metrage, Moderator Inwestycje

Co-Producers

Mike Downey, Sam Taylor,
Klaudia Śmieja-Rostworowska, Livia Filusová

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