

Zátopek will run for the Czech Republic to fight for an Oscar

In Prague, 11th October 2021 – The Czech Film and Television Academy (CFTA), which organizes the Czech Lion Awards, chooses every year the candidate of the Czech Republic for an Oscar. In this year's vote the academics have decided to nominate the film *Zátopek* directed by David Ondříček to fight for an Oscar in the category of *International Feature Film*. David Ondříček decided to cast the film, which describes the life story of the Czech Olympic champion Emil Zátopek, with Václav Neužil and Martha Issová in the lead roles. Ondříček worked on the screenplay together with Alice Nellis and Jan P. Muchow. The world premiere of the film *Zátopek* took place at the 55th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival.

The ceremonial gala evening of the 94th Awards of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences will take place on 27th March 2022. The films that will be shortlisted for the Oscars will be published on 21st December 2021 and the nominations will be published on 8th February 2022. This year the academics were choosing from 13 Czech feature, documentary and animated films that had been enrolled by their producers. Just behind the film *Zátopek* there were the films *Bird Atlas* and *Even Mice Belong in Heaven* (in alphabetical order). The voting took place from 27th September to 8th October 2021.

The fascinating drama *Zátopek* by David Ondříček depicts the figure of the most famous Czech athlete and four-time Olympic winner, who still inspires thousands of sportsmen around the world. The film presents the world-famous Czech long-distance runner and glorified celebrity who is struggling to find dignified existence in the politically complicated times and also his place next to his wife and Olympic winner Dana Zátopková. "The life story of Emil Zátopek was and still is a great challenge for me," says David Ondříček and he also adds: "It is a classic story of an outsider and not a very talented sportsman. At the same time it is a story of a man with an amazing will and desire to win, strong-minded and invincible, a man who became a legend. He was a lonely and thoughtful runner and at the same time a cheerful chatterbox who longed to be admired. He was an athlete who was determined to beat his rivals; however, friendship was more than victory for him." Apart from Václav Neužil and Martha Issová, who play the married couple of Olympic winners, David Ondříček also cast for example James Frecheville, Robert Mikluš, Jiří Šimek or Milan Mikulčík. Among the other artists who worked on the film there are the director of photography Štěpán Kučera, the architect Jan Vlasák, the editor Jarosław Kaminski or the costume designer Kateřina Štefková. The music for the film was composed by Beata Hlavenková.

David Ondříček belongs to the most successful contemporary Czech film directors. In 2013 he was listed in the prestigious selection "10 Directors to Watch" in the American magazine Variety. He made his directorial debut in 1996 and this film *Whisper* became the second most watched film in that year in the Czech Republic. In 1999 he founded a production company Lucky Man Films, which later on produced his other films. The film *Loners* (2000) won two Czech Lion Awards, three awards at the IFF

in Mannheim and Heidelberg and the Audience Awards at the IFF in Salonica and in Warsaw. The comedy *One Hand Can't Clap* (2003) obtained two Czech Lion Awards and a silver medal at the IFF in Houston. The film *Grandhotel* (2006) was selected to the Panorama section at Berlinale and awarded two Czech Lions. The drama *In the Shadow* (2012) obtained 9 Czech Lion Awards, including the award for the best film and the best director.

Last year it was the film called *Charlatan* directed by Agnieszka Holland which went to fight for the Oscar and it got among the shortlisted films. Since 1929 when the Oscars were awarded for the first time, two Czechoslovak and one Czech film have managed to get the award for the Best International Feature Film. In 1965 it was *The Shop on Main Street* by Ján Kádár and Elmar Klos. Two years later the film *Closely Watched Trains* by Jiří Menzel won the prize and in 1996 it was *Kolya* by Jan Svěrák. Six more films have been nominated for an Oscar by the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences: *The Loves of a Blond* by Miloš Forman in 1966 and *The Firemen's Ball* by the same director two years later. Jiří Menzel fought for the Oscar for the second time with his film *My Sweet Little Village* in 1986 and on the contrary Jan Svěrák got his first nomination for *The Elementary School* in 1991. In 2000 Jan Hřebejk with his nominated film *Divided We Fall* also travelled to Los Angeles and in 2003 the film *Želary* by Ondřej Trojan got the attention of the academics as well.

About the Czech Film and Television Academy:

The Czech Film and Television Academy was founded in 1995 and in 2013 it was transformed into a registered association. Its main aim is to support and promote Czech cinematographic art in the Czech Republic as well as abroad and create conditions for the development of Czech film. The academy presents the most prestigious Czech film award – the Czech Lion and nominates the Czech candidate for the awards of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. At the moment the CFTA consists of 354 members.

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