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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## PRESS RELEASE

### CZECH FILM CLASSICS GAINED APPRECIATION IN JOS

On 5th and 6th December 2012, the Czech Republic presented its first film festival at the premises of the National Film Institute (NFI) in Jos. A set of four best Czech films from 1960's of a so called Czech New Wave artistic movement were screened within two afternoons.

The event was launched by an opening speech of Mr. Afolabi Adesanya, Managing Director (CEO) of the Nigerian Film Corporation. Mr. Adesanya, who travelled from Abuja to attend the event, encouraged the students of the NFI present in the Auditorium to use this opportunity and look closely at the internationally acclaimed Czech films and get inspiration from other cultural milieu. „We must know the classics of the world cinematography to be able to produce our own outstanding films“, he said in his speech.

The event was attended by the Honorable representative of the Plateau State Government, Hon. Sylvanus L. Dongtoe, Commissioner for Tourism, Culture and Hospitality, who appreciated that a representative of the Czech Embassy has come to Jos, a place where many artistically talented Nigerians live, and expressed the hope that the reputation of Jos as a safe and friendly city to visitors will expand thanks to events like the Czech film festival.

The representative of the Czech Embassy, Ms. Eliška Kolářová, cultural attaché, delivered a speech on behalf of Ambassador of the Czech Republic. She explained the political context of the Czech New Wave movement and spoke about its most important director – Miloš Forman, who later emigrated to the U.S. Two of his later films, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Amadeus* belong to the most-honoured movies in Academy Award history, the first got 5 and *Amadeus* even 8 Oscars.

About 100 spectators, students of the NFI, lecturers and general public watched two films on Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> December. The first film, *The Firemen's Ball*, a comedy turned by Miloš Forman, was very well received by spectators. The audience was first giggling and the other half of the film loudly laughing at the grotesque scenes of the movie. The second movie, *The Cremator*, a more serious film by Juraj Herz about the madness and collaboration with occupying foreign power, with many horror scenes and innovative camera techniques, stirred up a live discussion among students.

The festival continued on 6th December 2012 by screening two more films, *The Witches' Hammer* and *the Closely Watched Trains*.

The Embassy of the Czech Republic plans to organise another Czech film exhibition in Jos in 2013. The organising of the festival would not be possible without the tireless support from the representatives of National Film Corporation and National Film Institute.

## **SYNOPSIS OF THE MOVIES:**

### **Hoří má panenka / The Firemen's Ball**

Director: Miloš Forman

Release date: 1967

Genre: Comedy



A seductively mild and humorous story about the fire department in a small town who organise a big party for the ex-boss of the department celebrating his 86th birthday. The whole town is invited but things don't go as planned. Someone is stealing the prizes to the lottery and the candidates for the Miss Fire-Department beauty contest are neither willing or particularly beautiful.

The movie pokes fun at citizens' committees, the culture of thievery, and solutions that surrender to problems. Miloš Forman's "The Firemen's Ball" was banned by the Communist regime in 1968. It received the Academy Award nomination for the Best Foreign Language Film in 1969.

Forman found success in America where he made two of the most-honored films in Academy Award history: One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest and Amadeus.

### **Spalovač mrtvol / The Cremator**

Director: Juraj Herz

Release date: 1968

Genre: Thriller / Horror



Juraj Herz's film The Cremator is set in Prague in late 30's. It tells the story of Karl Kopfrkingl, a professional cremator. Obsessed with his duties, Kopfrkingl believes he is not just cremating the dead, but liberating the souls of the departed. With Nazi forces gathering at the Czech border, he descends into a mania that allows him to enact his disturbed beliefs. Juraj Herz uses blacker-than-black humor, surrealistic imagery and a fantastically creepy performance by lead actor Rudolf Rušínský. The film was banned in Czechoslovakia after its premiere in 1969.

## **Kladivo na čarodějnice / The Witches' Hammer**

Director: Otakar Vávra

Release date: 1969

Genre: Drama / Historical



The story of the film is based on a novel about witch trials in Northern Moravia in the 1670s. The black-and-white allegorical film, full of symbols, follows the events from the beginning until the trial and execution of the priest.

These trials started when an altar boy observed an old woman hiding a host given out during communion. He alerted the priest who reported the incident to the owner of the local estate who, in turn, called in an inquisitor – Bobling von Edelstadt. The accused naturally confess after being brutally tortured, and their forced "confession" lead to their horrible deaths. In the end, 112 people were burned at the stake.

The film is referring to the stalinist methods and show trials in 1950s in Czechoslovakia, when the „enemies of the state“ where forced in prisons to "confess" that they plotted against the Communist regime.

## **Ostře sledované vlaky / Closely Watched Trains**

Director: Jiří Menzel

Release date: 1966

Genre: Comedy / Drama



It is a story about a boy working at a train station in German-occupied Czechoslovakia during World War II., based on a story by Bohumil Hrabal. Miloš Hrma, dispatcher's apprentice, longs to liberate himself from his virginity. This young man embarks on a journey of sexual awakening and self-discovery, encountering a universe of frustration, eroticism, and adventure within his sleepy backwater depot.

The 28-years old director Jiří Menzel received the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 1967. The Czech Communist government ordered to Menzel to return his Oscar, but he refused.

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More information (reviews, information about the Czech New Wave phenomenon and brochure of the festival) can be found on the Facebook page of the Embassy:  
<https://www.facebook.com/events/379031368844573/>