

MUNI
ARTS

Czech New Wave

CZS36

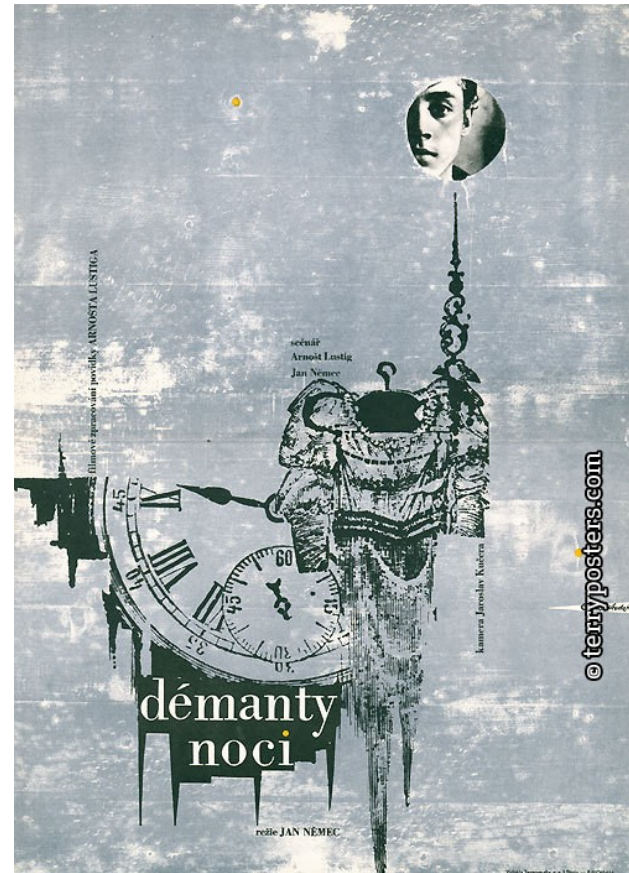
Dr. Šárka Gmitterková

Fall 2022

11. 10. 2022

Diamonds of the night dir. Jan Němec (1964)

- **Ester Krumbachová** – costume design and dramaturgy (not credited)
- „*Diamonds of the night* are easy as a slap. It's a principle of a target: if you want to say something important, it is better not to go for a center. If you are a good shooter, then aim for the periphery; and shoot there many times. The shots create holes, forming a target on their own.“
- Cinematography – Jaroslav Kučera a Miroslav Ondříček
- Starring: Antonín Kumbera (of Romani origin) and Ladislav Janský



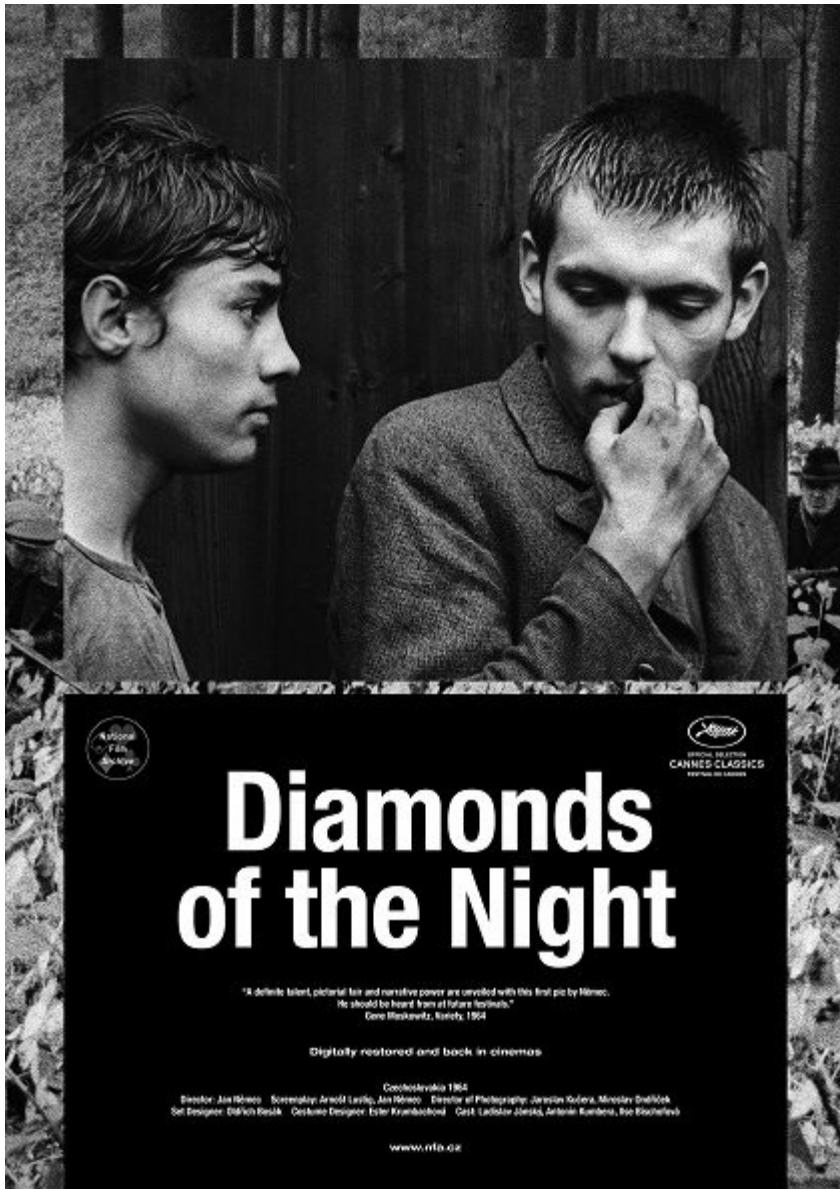
Diamonds of the Night

- Jan Němec was called enfant terrible of the Czech New Wave – a label, which he fulfilled already during his studies at FAMU (various clashes with multiple pedagogues, frankness and provocation both with attitudes, as well as opinions and his creative output)
- *Diamonds of the night*, as well as his previous short film *A Piece of Bread*, adapts a short story by Arnošt Lustig – a truly modern Czech author (such as Bohumil Hrabal), who reflected his experiences during World War II in a very naturalistic way. *Diamonds* are his own story – he escaped the transport of death, together with a friend, who later died.

1. Can you name reasons why this film can be considered as a modernist (surrealist) work of art (narration, historical background, characters, formal elements?)

2. How the film treats Jewishness / Holocaust topic? Can you think of films which treat this sensitive issue in a similar way?





Diamonds of the Night in cinemas and its afterlife

- Very low cinema attendance – 70 000 viewers
 - >> so-called second distribution circuit, just four copies circulating in cinemas in larger city centres and art cinemas, not in smaller cities
- Export potential was highlighted >> this film speaks the universally comprehensible cinematic language
- Praised by film critics – this movie ascends above strict and concrete historical time
- In 2018 the restored copy of the films was screened in the Cannes Classics section of the famous film festival, in August 2018 the film returned to regular distribution („Back to Cinemas“ project of the National Film Archive)

Reading L4

□ OWEN, Jonathan L. *Avant-Garde to New Wave. Czechoslovak Cinema, Surrealism and the Sixties*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn books, 2011, pp. 25–45.

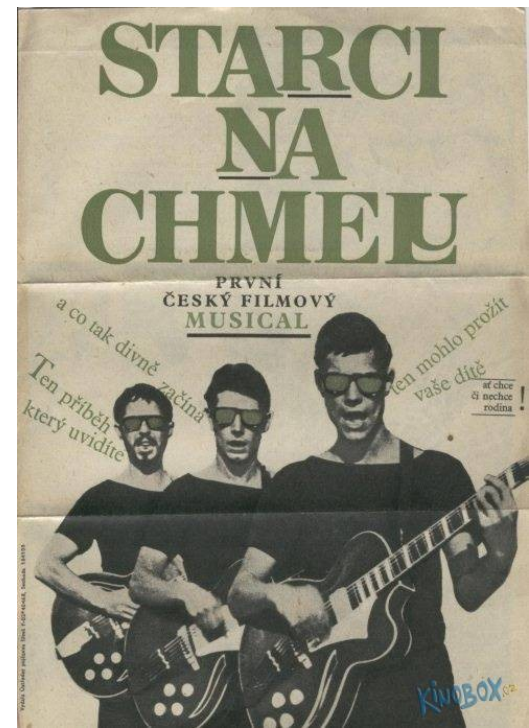


Avant-Garde to New Wave
Czechoslovak Cinema, Surrealism and the Sixties

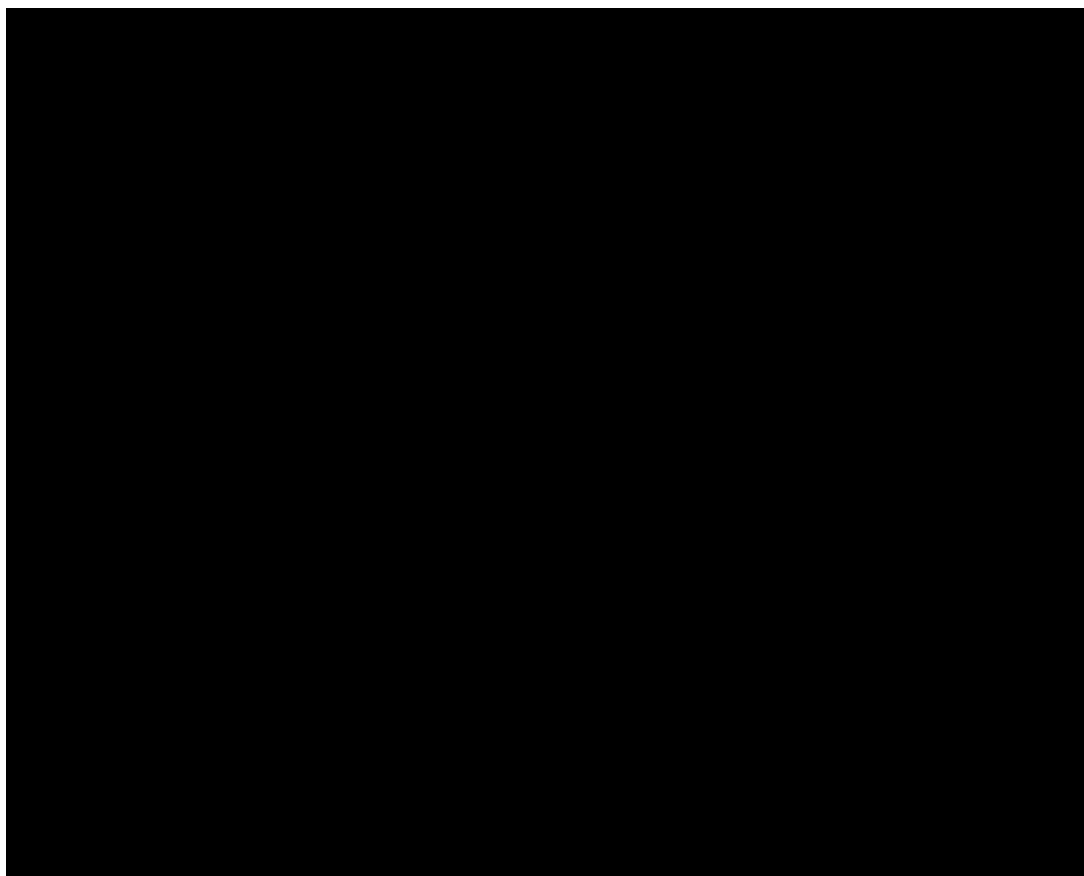
Jonathan L. Owen

„Juvenilization“ of cinema

- In the second half of the 1950s the number of cinemagoing audiences rises up to unprecedented levels; however it drops down rapidly throughout the 1960s
- **Television** is a crucial factor in such development >> at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s it is a preferred leisure activity for the middle generation
- Young audiences (up to 25 years of age) prefer cinemagoing (+ outdoor cinemas)
- They enjoy genre films and movies growing out of contemporary music and theatre scene (*The Hop-Pickers*, *Loves of a blonde*, *If a Thousand Clarinets*)



The Hop-Pickers: Bossa Nova (1964)



Generations of film characters in New Wave Films

- In the first half of the 1960s films of the New Wave have contemporary setting, they are apolitical (with the exception of Evald Schorm's films?), with „middle class“ ordinary characters
- Young generation is creatively portrayed through new faces – not glamorous, but unexceptional and commonplace
- Comedies with grotesque overtones rather than tragic portrayals
- Boys and young men are clumsy, awkward and childish, not rebellious (Forman's male heroes); emotional and lyrical protagonists (characters portrayed by Vladimír Pucholt)



Generations of film characters in New Wave Films

- Female characters lack such focused attention as their male counterparts; their presence is closely tied to the existence of distinctive professional actresses
- Věra Chytilová's films are the exception (*The Ceiling*, *Something Different*, *Fruit of Paradise*) >> emancipation, female self-exploration, but also comedic overtones, f.e. *Daisies* as the portrayal of young, dynamic, self-indulgent and destructive femininity
- The naive blonde type (*Loves of a Blonde*) and flirtatious brunettes (*Black Peter*, characters of Věra Křesadlová, Táňa Fischerová in *Hotel for Strangers*)
- Jana Brejchová is starring in the films of Evald Schorm (*Courage for Everyday*, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, *The End of a Priest*)
- Female intellectuals are negatively portrayed (such as Jiřina Jirásková in *Courage for Everyday*)



Middle-aged and older generation of characters

- Ordinary parents rather than extraordinary heroes
- Struggles between generations portrayed extensively in Miloš Forman's, Ivan Passer's and Jaroslav Papoušek films, but only Intimate Lighting brings a positive take on the coexistence of generations under one roof
- Fathers are symbols of totalitarian patriarchy, but they can also be considered as the continuity of domestic film and literary tradition (the figure of father Kondelík)
- On the contrary, the motherly archetype, so strongly rooted in Czech culture, disappears



Film and TV Faculty of Performing Arts: FAMU

- Crucial formative background of the Czech New Wave
- 1946 – Faculty of Performing Arts is established
- First departments – Department of directing, cinematography, scriptwriting and dramaturgy, in 1950 the department of production was added
- Very liberal atmosphere despite the regime >> screenings of foreign films, which were not distributed in cinemas (films from the 1930s and 1940s, foreign contemporary movies), inspirational creative personalities as teachers (Milan Kundera, František Daniel, Italian and other western and eastern european directors)
- Since 1957 Otakar Vávra (an influential director) was the head of the department of directing and teacher of the future New Wave core auteurs (Věra Chytilová, Evald Schorm, Jan Schmidt, Jiří Menzel, who studied in the years 1957–1962).