



Donostia Zinemaldia  
Festival de San Sebastián  
International Film Festival

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Czech Republic's Official Entry  
Best International Feature Film  
at the 95<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards®

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A man in a blue coat with white embroidery and a white cravat holds a large book of sheet music. He is looking at a woman in a red dress with white lace sleeves and a red corsage. They are in a dimly lit room with dark curtains in the background.

# IL BOEMO

Written and directed by Petr Vaclav





## ABOUT IL BOEMO

The film tells the story of a Prague miller who went to Italy, and became the most sought-after composer of his time. For fifteen years, **Josef Mysliveček (1737-1781)**, known as Il Boemo, wrote for all the Italian courts and for many city theatres, from Naples to Florence, Turin, and Venice. In Italy, he also met the young Mozart, whom he befriended and influenced. He died of syphilis in Rome, alone, forgotten. His life is the story of this extraordinarily talented artist and follows his journey to the top and his fall.

The music was recorded by Vaclav Luks with his ensemble Collegium 1704 and leading soloists such as Philippe Jaroussky, Raffaella Milanesi, Emöke Baráth, Simona Šaturová, Krystian Adam, and Juan Sancho.





*"I was interested in the topic of a man who could have lived a peaceful life of a respected citizen in Prague. However, he abandons these certainties and leaves to follow his desire to become an opera composer in Italy, which was the superpower in the realm of the opera at that time. He goes into the unknown and has neither money nor influential friends. On Josef's example, I wanted to tell the story of how someone becomes whom he wants to be, and how he achieves self-fulfilment through the career of an artist. And how he can lose this career."*

**Petr Vaclav**, director





## SYNOPSIS

The extraordinary and unknown life story of Josef Myslivecek - "Il Boemo" -, one of the most prolific opera composers in 18th century Italy, who inspired Mozart and became his friend. Very demanded in Naples, he was celebrated in Venice, then the pleasure capital of Europe.



**writer and director:** PETR VACLAV

**starring:** VOJTĚCH DYK, BARBARA RONCHI,  
ELENA RADONICICH, LANA VLADY

**producer:** JAN MACOLA, MIMESIS FILM (CZ)

**co-producers:** KATEŘINA ONDŘEJKOVÁ PRODUCTION GROUP -  
CZECH TELEVISION (CZ), DUGONG FILMS (IT), SENTIMENTALFILM  
(SK), LIBOR WINKLER (CZ), MAGICLAB (CZ), DANIEL BERGMANN (CZ),  
JAN MENCLÍK (CZ)

**camera:** DIEGO ROMERO SUAREZ LLANOS

**conductor and orchestra:** VÁCLAV LUKS, COLLEGIUM 1704

**soloists:** PHILIPPE JAROUSSKY, EMÖKE BARÁTH,  
RAFFAELLA MILANESI, SIMONA ŠATUROVÁ, JUAN SANCHO,  
KRYSTIAN ADAM, SOPHIE HARMSSEN

**editors:** PAOLO COTTIGNOLA, FLORENT VASSAULT,  
FLORENT MANGEOT

**architects:** IRENA HRADECKÁ, LUCA SERVINO

**costumes:** ANDREA CAVALLETTO

**sound:** DANIEL NĚMEC, FRANCESCO LIOTARD

**artistic make-up:** ANDREA McDONALD

**executive production:** KLÁRA BOTLÍKOVÁ, VENDY FENCLOVÁ


**VFX supervisor:** MICHAL KŘEČEK

**expert consultant:** DANIEL E. FREEMAN

**in Czech and Italian** (subtitles: Italian, English, Czech)

**length:** 140 minutes





# MAKERS OF THE FILM





## PETR VACLAV DIRECTOR AND SCREENWRITER

**Petr Vaclav** is a graduate of the Film and TV School at the Academy of Performing Arts (FAMU) in Prague. For his film *Paní Le Murie (Madame Le Murie)*, he was nominated for a student Oscar. His debut feature, *Marian*, won a number of international awards in 1996, including a Silver Leopard at the International Film Festival in Locarno and prizes for direction in Angers, Belfort, Tehran, and Bratislava, and it was also nominated for a Czech Lion award.

His next film, *Paralelní světy (Parallel Worlds)*, was a finalist in the NHK Award — Sundance scriptwriting competition and was screened as part of the competition section at the festival in San Sebastian. His film *Cesta ven (The Way Out)* was shown in the ACID section at the Cannes Film Festival in 2014, becoming the first Czech film to premiere at the this most prestigious film festival in 23 years. It was awarded seven Czech Lions, including Best Film, Best Screenplay, and Best Director.

The drama *Nikdy nejsme sami (We Are Never Alone)* (2017) won the audience Tagesspiegel Award at the Berlinale Festival and the prize for artistic contribution at the Cairo International Film Festival. The documentary *Zpověď zapomenutého (Confession of the Vanished)* then won the Fipa d'or Award at the Biarritz Festival. Vaclav's most recent work, the road movie *Skokan (The Jumper)*, arrived in Czech cinemas in June 2017.



**You tell the story of a historical figure: the composer Josef Mysliveček. Who was he?**

Josef Mysliveček was born in 1737 to a Prague miller. He studied milling and became a member of the millers' guild in Prague. It wasn't until the age of twenty-five that he dared to defy the wish of his long-dead father that he should look after the mill. He also disappointed the expectation of his mother and his twin brother that he would remain in Prague with them. He disappeared abruptly to Venice, and after four years of residing in Italy he got his first incredible commission to write an opera for Teatro San Carlo in Naples. This was the largest opera house at this time, and the most renowned singers sang there. There are no historical sources which record how this rapid progress in his career occurred. My film begins in Venice where the young Josef is trying to find his way around in foreign surroundings. It captures the events which led to his first major commission, and it goes on to describe the life of an artist who builds a dazzling career, but then loses it. It is an Icarian story of a rise and a fall. Mysliveček's suffering and death are tragic. Even so, my film is the story of great fortune because Josef became a major composer. He achieved the artistic destiny he desired. His life was short. But it was a full one. He achieved self-fulfilment, and he left behind his music which still speaks to us even after 240 years of oblivion.

**What aspects of his life and works, unknown to the public, did you particularly want to capture in the film?**

I wanted to tell the story of a man who followed a vital urge to live his life, to become somebody, to achieve self-fulfilment. I also endeavoured to incorporate some of his best arias in the film, representing different aspects of his skills as a composer. The entire film is about how his career grows, and how he loses it.

**How would you describe the era in which your film is set?**

Josef grew up in the occupied and bombarded Prague of the Seven Years' War. We are all familiar with this conflict from the film Barry Lyndon. Three years after Mysliveček's first great success at Teatro San Carlo in Naples, Marie Antoinette marries Louis XVI, her sister having married King Ferdinand of Naples two years prior. Mysliveček wrote his greatest operas for the

royal theatre in Naples. The queen of France and the queen of Naples were both sisters of Austrian Emperor Joseph II. The general public knows him from the film Amadeus. Mysliveček dies eight years before the French Revolution. At that time, Beethoven is nineteen years old.

**What was special about Josef Mysliveček's relationship with Wolfgang A. Mozart?**

Josef Mysliveček was thirty-three and was writing his eighth Italian opera when he met the thirteen-year-old Mozart and his fifty-one-year-old father, Leopold. It happened in Bologna during the Mozarts' Grand Tour. The father and son were travelling around Italy, looking for contracts. Leopold also secretly hoped that with his son's success, the whole family would move to Italy and never return to Austria, where they felt unappreciated. Leopold showed great interest in Mysliveček, both as an impresario and a father: he wanted to understand how this German-speaking foreigner from the other side of the Alps, a citizen of the Austrian Empire, essentially their compatriot, had managed to make such a great career in Italy. He undoubtedly wanted advice. Wolfgang was more interested in Mysliveček's music. The overture to his first opera, Mitridate, is influenced by Mysliveček's overture to his Bologna opera, La Nitteti. We can even say that it directly borrows some musical ideas. Josef and Wolfgang respected each other greatly. The only psychological description of Mysliveček we have is contained in one of the letters Mozart wrote to his father. In it, he describes Mysliveček as a man full of fire and passion. After meeting in Bologna and Milan, the two composers did not see each other again for six years. After Mozart had escaped from Salzburg at the age of twenty-one and had failed to find employment in Germany, Mysliveček attempted to get him a position in Naples. He did not succeed, however, because there had been a change in the management of Teatro San Carlo at that time, and "il Boemo", who was also gravely ill, lost his influence over the new directors. I think we can say without exaggeration that Mysliveček had achieved the career and lifestyle which Mozart himself was seeking seeking and never got. As an adult, Mozart did not receive a single commission in Italy, and he never returned there.



### **How did you come to know Mysliveček's music?**

When I started this project, there were only about three recordings of his operas, and they were really dreadful, played by average orchestras with very average singers. Yet Mysliveček wrote for the greatest castrati, tenors and sopranos of his time. This alone means his music must be performed by the best voices of our time. And even for them, the castrato and coloratura parts remain extremely difficult. At this point, however, I was unable to recognise where the blame lay, and I was terrified that Mysliveček was simply an inferior composer. Václav Luks, one of the greatest contemporary conductors of Baroque music, who had been an advisor to me in writing the screenplay from the outset, reassured me. He told me about Mysliveček's music. Shortly afterwards, he travelled to Paris. We made copies of two of Mysliveček's operas from the the National archives, and he played them on the piano for me and sang the vocal parts that afternoon. Also, he explained to me Mysliveček's dramaturgical skills. His sense for the psychology of the characters, his ability to express their emotions. I began to grasp the grandness of Mysliveček's music. When I was a fellow at Villa Medici a little later, Václav Luks flew over for a few days, and played L'Olimpiade for me on the piano. It was an incredible experience. When he got the opportunity to perform it in a co-production between the Czech National Theatre, Dijon Opera and Caen Opera, I decided to film a documentary about it. Thus, I was present for over three months of rehearsals and was able to follow Václav Luks, the singers, and all the work that went into making the opera. That was a crucial experience for me.

### **What were the main sources that you used to find out information about Mysliveček's life?**

The amount of materials available which relate directly to Mysliveček is not great. Czech musicologist Stanislav Bohadlo collected existing sources in his book, Josef Mysliveček v dopisech (Josef Mysliveček in Correspondence). American scholar Daniel E. Freeman followed up on his work in the monograph Josef Mysliveček, the Man and His Music. Daniel became a great ally and dedicated advisor to me, and we exchanged hundreds of pages worth of emails. I read various texts from Paris libraries which had been printed during Mysliveček's time. I needed to have publications from that time. To feel that period close-up, in my own hands. I

consulted numerous interesting texts about venereal diseases, travel journals... I studied many books: Charles Burney, the memoirs of Goldoni, Gozzi, Casanova's monumental Histoire de ma vie. I read memoirs of anyone I could get hold of, correspondence, the literature of the time. Of course, one of the greatest sources for understanding the music world of that time, and also the world in general, is the correspondence of Mozart. I also read many of the latest expert treatises and met a number of the authors of these works.

### **How is it possible that Mysliveček has been forgotten?**

First of all, he died of syphilis. Many people caught it at the time, but it was still considered a disease of immoral people. Mysliveček was undoubtedly condemned by many. This is evidenced in Leopold Mozart's letter to his son, in which he states that he is sorry for their friend, but that his misfortune was of his own making because he had led a wicked and shameful life and so it was no surprise that he had to bear the shame which all the world could see. Another reason why Mysliveček has been forgotten is the fact that he was a foreigner. He worked continuously and travelled across Italy from south to north, and from north to south, for over fifteen years. But he never had the time to settle anywhere. He wasn't married, his relationships were intermittent. Although he was famous, there was no-one who wanted to nurture his legacy. A third reason is that opera seria as a genre fell out of favour with the collapse of monarchies and disappeared. Mysliveček is not the only opera composer to who has been forgotten. Almost nobody knows of the wonderful Traetta. Cimarosa and Jommelli are well-known, but only in Italy and even so almost nobody plays their operas. Johann Christian Bach is really only known because he was Johann Sebastian's son. This phenomenon of oblivion is only really seen in the eighteenth century. Even Bach was not played for a long time, and he was basically rediscovered. And in Mysliveček's own time, Vivaldi was almost never performed. The history of music is to some extent the history of forgetting and rediscovering, a story of fashionable admiration and unjust damnation. Success is never won for ever but neither it is lost for eternity.



**Is the issue of admiration and obscurity something which also affects the famous singers whom Mysliveček worked with?**

Definitely. Caterina Gabrielli, for example, who is one of the major characters in my film, was incredibly famous, all Italian theatres were fighting over her. Catherine the Great invited her to Russia. Gabrielli asked for a huge salary. Shocked, the Empress replied: "This money equals the pay of my generals." The singer calmly advised: "So call your generals to sing for you." The Empress was forced to surrender. Caterina Gabrielli died fourteen years after her last opera performance. Nobody published any obituaries or articles about her.

**The film also focuses a lot on the status of women in society in that era. Is that intentional?**

It is merely the direct consequence of the story. Women played a fundamental role in Josef's life. And they naturally bring with them the issue of their status in the social order at the time. On the one hand, we can see a free-spirited Venetian noblewoman, one that Casanova or Cardinal de Bernis could have described. On the other hand, we also see a woman who is ensnared by her despotic husband, and a young woman destroyed by her authoritarian father. We also provide a portrait of the most famous soprano of her time. In her case, we can get a sense of the special status enjoyed by an opera star who was wealthy, had no husband or guardian, and could do what she wanted. This was a woman who was lauded and feared, seen as a great artist but also as a woman of dubious morals and ill repute. At that time, the status of actors and dancers was a poor one, but not even a great opera star could escape the deeply ambivalent response of society, oscillating between admiration and suspicion.

**How did you make use of Mysliveček's music?**

From the outset, I worked with Václav Luks, as one of the greatest experts on Baroque music, on the screenplay. He then recorded the music for the film with his orchestra, Collegium 1704. We filmed all the opera scenes live, although playback would have been common practice. Playback is cheaper and ensures technical cleanliness. But no singer can perform in playback what they experience when singing live. The art of singing depends on expression, on acting,

but it's also a physical performance. That's what makes the profession so difficult and so thrilling. That's why there has always been so much admiration for singers. I wanted the live performance to convey the uniqueness which characterises each note, each moment of the singers' performance. But we also recorded some music in the studio so that I had additional material to edit in. We also used it for an upcoming CD with Mysliveček's music, which includes a number of arias nobody had studied since the composer's death. The only playback we had to resort to was for actress Barbara Ronchi, who plays Caterina Gabrielli. She had to learn to breathe, to sing, to perform. She worked very hard so that she could be completely credible.

**The film's cinematographer is Diego Romero from Spain. Why did you choose him?**

I was looking for a cinematographer with a great aesthetic feeling, a sense for natural light, and experience with handheld camera work. I wanted a living, non-academic, contemporary picture. I also wanted a cinematographer who wasn't going to complain if he didn't get a steadicam, cranes, tracks, and so on. Someone who is able to light theatres. I needed somebody who had filmed documentaries, and who was more interested in the magnetising observation of actors rather than in form. Someone who would be able to produce a beautiful picture with a lot of production values, but no empty embellishments.

**How did you choose your actors?**

It took me a long time to find someone to play Josef, a foreigner from Prague, surrounded by Italian women and men. After considering well-known Anglo-Saxon actors, and after looking at various Austrian and Slavic actors, I came to the realisation that no actor of a different nationality could embody a Czech. You can feel it in the manners, you can see it in the facial expressions, in the smile, and especially in the accent. In the end, I decided to work with a Czech actor. Vojta Dyk is also a musician, with a feel for music, and he is able to lead. So he was an obvious choice. The excellent Roman casting director, Stefania De Santis, helped me to find Italian actors. She introduced me to the Italian acting world, which I was unfamiliar with. In the scenes set in Venice, I only wanted actors from the north, with a Venetian-Lombard accent. That was very important to me, as I am unable to hear certain nuances myself, and I needed to ensure their speech was



authentic. I didn't want to rely on someone "putting on" the accent. I did make one exception, however, although the actress worked with a dialect coach to get rid of her Roman accent. For the Neapolitan characters, I asked my actors to rewrite my Italian dialogues into the Neapolitan dialect. They had a lot of fun with that, and the lines also became very natural for them, since they partly wrote the text themselves. Vojta Dyk had to learn everything from scratch, and the role was very demanding for him due to the difficulty of the language.

**Doing a historical film in Italian must have been a great leap into the unknown for you.**

I want my films to change my life, so they've always got to be a journey into the unknown. Initially, I joked that it was going to be such an expensive film that I might never make it. That all this work will make me a very knowledgeable scholar but deaden me as a filmmaker. Finally, we made this film. It has led me to adopt Italy as my third home. France is my second home. The idea of doing films that are easy to make does not excite me too much.

**You've been living in Paris for twenty years. You are a French citizen. Isn't this departure to foreign climes in some way a parallel to Mysliveček's life?**

Well, for sure: the story of an artist who decides to resettle and make it in show business somewhere new, to work in a language which isn't his mother tongue; these are naturally topics which are somewhat familiar to me.

**What do you expect from your film?**

My first goal is to ensure that the film has an impact on the audience. Right after that, my second goal is definitely to ensure Josef Mysliveček comes out of obscurity. This process has already started, slowly, and I am convinced that our film will be of great assistance in this regard. I think that this can surely be achieved in Mysliveček's home country, in the Czech Republic. But I'd also like to return him to Italy, the country where he was born as an artist. The return of Mysliveček's works to the global opera scene would be my ultimate dream.

**Petr Vaclav, director and screenwriter**









## JAN MACOLA, PRODUCER

**Jan Macola** joined Barrandov Studio in 2006 after studying international relations at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University. At Barrandov, he worked as Marketing Manager until 2011, and during his final two years as Head of Development and Coproduction. This gave him detailed knowledge of the practice of Czech and international film funding. Jan Macola founded his own production company, Mimesis Film, in 2012.

His first production, *Cesta ven (The Way Out)*, was made in cooperation with director Petr Vaclav. It was screened in the ACID section at the Cannes Film Festival and went on to win a number of awards, including seven Czech Lions, among them Best Film, presented to the producer of the film. Their next film together was the drama *Nikdy nejsme sami (We Are Never Alone)* which was selected for the Forum section at the Berlinale Festival where it won the audience award.

In addition to feature films, Jan Macola also makes documentaries, winning a Czech Lion for *Normální autistický film (Normal Autistic Film)* together with director Miroslav Janek in 2017. His other documentary productions are *Na Sever (Into the North)*, *Zpověď zapomenutého (Confession of the Vanished)*, *V Mosulu (Inside Mosul)*, and *Nebe (Heaven)*. In 2016, Jan Macola and his wife Alžběta reconstructed and reopened the Kino Pilotů cinema in Prague-Vršovice and founded the Pilot Film distribution company. Jan Macola is a member of the Czech Film and Television Academy and the international ACE Producers association.





## VOJTĚCH DYK, LEAD ROLE

**Vojtěch Dyk** is a Czech actor and musician who studied at the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (DAMU) in Prague, specialising in drama. He used to be a member of the Czech National Theatre and also cooperated with independent theatres.

He became better known to the public after appearing in several television series and in the films *Ženy v pokušení (Women in Temptation)* by Jiří Vejdělek and *Tři bratři (Three Brothers)* by Jan Svěrák. Both films are among the most successful Czech films of recent years. In 2022, he appeared in the critically acclaimed film *Zpráva o záchraně mrtvého (Saving One Who Was Dead)*, directed by Václav Kadrnka who main award at the International Film Festival Karlovy Vary in 2017.

Music fans know Vojtěch Dyk as the frontman of Nightwork. In recent years, he performs with his own project, D.Y.K., and with B-Side Band from Brno.



**Il Boemo wasn't your first major film role, but certainly the most challenging one. Did you realise that before shooting began?**

I didn't realise it at first, and to be honest it didn't even occur to me when I read the script, which I had in Czech. It was only after about a week when it occurred to me that everything I had read until that time in Czech I would have to learn in Italian. And I realised that it would be far from easy. But the real jolt didn't come until I actually started learning Italian and tried to "memorise" one scene. It took me a whole week, and there were 60 scenes like that in the script. At that point it finally hit me how hard it was going to be.

**Did you ever worry you that wouldn't manage?**

I did. Plenty of times. Once every fortnight or so I would call up the director or the producer to tell them I was worried I couldn't do it. The whole situation in Czech film and culture in general caught up with me at that point because every day after several hours of learning Italian texts I had to run off to act or rehearse instead of taking some time off. It was very demanding.

**What did you know about Josef Mysliveček beforehand? Did you know his music?**

I didn't know his music or practically anything about Josef Mysliveček himself. Probably like most people in the Czech Republic. I knew that he was a composer and that he had a certain relationship to Prague and Italy. But that was pretty much it.

**Director Petr Vaclav had been preparing the film for several years, down to the very last detail. What did he tell you about Josef Mysliveček beforehand to bring him closer to you?**

To exaggerate a little, in a way I am convinced that Petr Vaclav chose this theme as a parallel to his own life. I actually told him that. Every time he talked about Josef Mysliveček, I'd say to myself, "You're talking about yourself, Petr. Or about who you want to be. Or about who you are deep down inside but aren't showing it just yet. Or you perhaps are showing it and I just don't know it." So, I have to admit that I drew a lot from the director's own personality.

But Petr Vaclav was truly very inspiring, and an invaluable source of information. He knows the second half of the 18th century to perfection, so he can describe it in detail. Although there were clear rules that needed to be followed to the letter, we did on the other hand have considerable freedom in portraying Josef Mysliveček. There are not many records of his life, except perhaps for his correspondence with Wolfgang and Leopold Mozart. Our ambition was to show Josef Mysliveček as a normal guy, not just as an ambitious and career-driven man. Firstly, this would not gain him much sympathy, and secondly, we would also very likely be deviating from the truth.

So, Petr and I talked in advance about how to deal with the main character and how to follow each other's thoughts and intentions. Petr is used to working with people who are not actors and often chooses professional actors depending on whether they are capable of what you might call "not acting". Which is an interesting change, because it's a slightly different way of expression, and I found it refreshing. We then dealt with the theme and the concept of the era behind the scenes, during the filming itself, because the environment of theatres and palaces again changed the atmosphere.

**Filming Il Boemo was about striving for maximum authenticity. Did you find the shooting unusual in any way?**

The way the sets were lit and how cameraman Diego Romero was able to work with the light was particularly remarkable. I liked his approach very much, although it must have been very difficult for him. But candlelight was the only way to achieve authentic atmosphere. As a result, the film does not look poorly lit or dark on screen.

**How was it for you to be shooting musical scenes with musicians from Collegium 1704 and with global opera stars?**

Fortunately enough, I've had enough experience of filming, so I wasn't nervous. But it was a pleasure to conduct stars like Philippe Jaroussky and Emöke Baráth. Of course, I started rehearsing for this sort of scenes back when I was twelve, when I conducted Carmen and Carmina Burana at home. There were other people present this time, of course, but I now have more experience to draw from. I still enjoy conducting and sometimes I conduct with a pencil in my hand. What is more, it is essentially true that if the orchestra is good enough, there is no need for a conductor. The musicians just don't know it yet.

**Do you think Josef Mysliveček was your breakthrough role?**

It was a certain breakthrough for me, yes. So far, I've only been given the roles of simpler men, partly on account of my age. But I've wanted to play a more complex character in a film for some time now. Nothing came up, so I just kept on taking the "undemanding" roles. After a time, I decided to change my approach to life, I began to reject this type of roles, and somehow subconsciously I created the space for something new. And that was when I heard from Petr Vaclav. I would really like to continue with such complex characters in the future, because the work is much more enriching for me.

**Vojtěch Dyk, lead role**





## DIEGO ROMERO SUAREZ LLANOS, CAMERAMAN

Spanish cinematographer **Diego Romero** has made feature and documentary films in many countries. He has worked with director Roberto Minervini for a number of years. Their film *The Other Side* (2015) wowed the audience of the Un Certain Regard competition section at the festival in Cannes, while the film *What You Gonna Do When the World Is on Fire* (2018) won four awards at the festival in Venice.







A young girl with her hair styled in an updo stands in a grand, ornate room. She is wearing a historical costume consisting of a dark blue dress with a white ruffled collar and a white ruffled waist. The dress has a full skirt and a white sash. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The room features a checkered floor, a large red curtain with a gold crest, and a golden statue on a pedestal to the left. A red upholstered chair is visible to the right.

# COSTUMES



## COSTUMES

Dressing really well, even in the 18th century, was still very much the domain of the financially secure. Everything was naturally done by hand, from weaving the fabrics to sewing on the very last button. And with such care! What, though, if you want to stitch exactly the same clothes today, in the twenty-first century, using exactly the same fabrics and other techniques? Fortunately, there are still factories which have been working for several centuries without interruption that are able to produce the same fabrics worn by Josef Mysliveček and Caterina Gabrielli.







## ANDREA CAVALLETTO, COSTUME DESIGNER

Andrea Cavalletto graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice in 2004 and the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome in 2007, where he was a student of costume designer Piero Tosi and scenographer Andrea Crisanti. He began his career in film and theatre productions as an assistant to costume designers Maurizio Millenotti and Alessandro Lai. In 2009, he made his debut as a costume designer in his own right for the film *Diecia Inverni*, directed by Valerio Mieli. The film won a Silver Ribbon, an Italian film award, and a David di Donatello Award, the Italian equivalent of the American Academy Awards (Oscars).

Various cinematographic collaborations followed, including films such as *I Primi della Lista*, *Piuma*, *Itaker*, *Il Sud è Niente* (entered in the competition at Berlinale 2014), *Il Padre d'Italia*, and the drama *7 minutes*.

Andrea Cavalletto won a David di Donatello Award for best costumes for the film *Torneranno i prati* by director Ermanno Olmi in 2014.

He has also taught classes in film and theatre costume design at the Academy of Fine Arts in Perugia and the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice.



**You're very busy and many people want to work with you. Why did you accept the invitation to work on *Il Boemo*?**

When I met Petr Vaclav and familiarised myself with his work, I immediately understood how significant this project would be. I valued his approach, enthusiasm, and the depth of preparation he devoted to the film. And that, together with his love of beauty, was the biggest incentive for me to work with him.

**You're Venetian. Could you describe what this identity means to you? Who were your teachers? What schools did you go to?**

Growing up in Venice means being surrounded by beauty right away. You then hold on to that beauty for the rest of your life and feel "at home" in it. I studied in Venice and then in Rome, where I attended Scuola Nazionale di Cinema and where I met Piero Tosi (costume designer for Visconti, De Sica, Fellini), who became the light of my working life.

**When it comes to designing and making period costumes, Italy is a superpower. Where does the tradition come from?**

It is a tradition based on the work of craftsmen and small traders who have devoted themselves to it since time immemorial. Today, at a time of technological progress and product standardisation, it is very tiring to keep this demanding craft alive. Italy, however, still has all the means to do so at the highest level, even though production costs are very high and not everyone can afford it.

**How did you choose the costumes for *Il Boemo*? What is the ratio of those you designed and stitched yourself to those you hired?**

Some costumes were selected from the vaults of the tailors of Ancient Rome, from companies such as *Costumi d'Arte Peruzzi* and *Annamode*, which have a huge archive and a long history. The costumes worn by the leading actors were newly made and tailored.

**Wigs and make-up, the responsibility of the make-up artist, go hand-in-hand with the costumes. How would you describe your cooperation with Andrea McDonald, the make-up artist on the film?**

Make-up and hairstyles are crucial to the film because they shape the characters of the actors even before they step into their costumes. Andrea McDonald and I shared a lot of research material with each other, mostly paintings and drawings, to make sure we found the right appearance for each character.

**You certainly have plenty of experience of how actors react to dress rehearsals. For many of them, it's the first time they put on clothes from the eighteenth century. They say it is a special moment for them. What are your impressions?**

Wearing a costume from a different era than our own makes it possible for actors to understand which movements the body was forced to make and which were impossible. This alone leads to a "posture" that is in itself new and far from the present. I believe that this experience, if used properly, can help actors a lot in their work.

**How much did the costumes we see in the film on Barbara Ronchi, Elena Radonicich, and Vojtěch Dyk actually cost?**

Making clothes of this type is still a drawn-out task to this day, although we now have the assistance of technology: it took about five people four weeks to make each costume. Back in the 18th century, without the technology, about 2/3 of a day's work on a loom was needed to make 40 cm of fabric alone, with at least 5 or 6 metres of fabric needed for an outfit. Then everything had to be stitched by hand. I would say that fine clothing was almost unaffordable, and the price of an outfit would be comparable today to the price of a small apartment.

**What will happen to the costumes you made for *Il Boemo*?**

They will remain in the tailors' archive and serve as reference models for future works. We will bring some of them to Prague in the autumn as part of an exhibition about Josef Mysliveček, which will be open to visitors in the Clam-Gallas Palace.

**Andrea Cavalletto, costume designer**









MUSIC





## VÁCLAV LUKS, CONDUCTOR

**Václav Luks** is the founder and artistic director of the Prague Baroque orchestra **Collegium 1704**. He studied at Schole Cantorum Basiliensis in Basel, Switzerland. Under his leadership, Collegium 1704 quickly establish itself as one of the elite world orchestras dedicated to the interpretation of 17th and 18th century music.

The ensemble regularly appears at prestigious European festivals such as Salzburger Festspiele, Bachfest Leipzig, Chopin Festival Warsaw, Lucerne Festival, Oude Muziek Utrecht, and Handel-Festspiele Halle, and performs at prominent concert and opera houses — Opéra Royal de Versailles, Wiener Konzerthaus, Berliner Philharmonie, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, BOZAR in Brussels, and elsewhere.

Between 2009 and 2022, Václav Luks and Collegium 1704 were involved in four international opera projects — a production of Handel's opera *Rinaldo*, the modern premiere of Mysliveček's opera *L'Olimpiade*, which was nominated for the International Opera Awards in 2014, the modern premiere of Vivaldi's opera *Arsilda, Regina di Ponto*, and a production of Handel's opera *Alcina*.

Under his direction, Collegium 1704 performed Mysliveček's oratorio *La passione di Gesù Cristo* at the Prague Spring International Music Festival in 2013, *Abramo ed Isacco* at the prestigious Salzburger Festspiele in 2022, and recorded an album of Mysliveček's violin concerts together with Leila Schayegh.



**What did you know about Josef Mysliveček before Petr Vaclav approached you with the idea of making a film?**

At first, I thought of Josef Mysliveček as a second-rate composer who had a bit of success outside his own country. I knew what he allegedly looked like from historical sources and from the memorial plaque in the Church of San Lorenzo in Lucina in Rome, where he is buried and which bears an inscription along the lines “Here lies Giuseppe Myslivecek, a great friend of Mozart.”

To begin with, I wasn't sure who he really was. So I developed an interest, looking at his music and scores. After our experience with his opera *L'Olimpiade*, which we performed with Collegium 1704 in collaboration with the National Theatre and French opera houses, I had the certainty that we were dealing with a Czech composer who became a major figure in Italy in the second half of the 18th century and who had a career like no other.

His music has the potential to captivate present-day audiences. This very summer, in fact, we performed Mysliveček's oratorio *Abramo ed Isacco* (Abraham and Isaac) at the prestigious Salzburger Festspiele, and the listeners were in raptures.

**How did you choose the vocalists for *Il Boemo*?**

Given that Josef Mysliveček worked with the greatest opera performers of his time, his operatic music places considerable demands on the vocalists. He wrote his music with specific vocalists in mind, their choice corresponding to the artistic material at his disposal. Petr Vaclav and I went about it the same way, which is why our choice aimed for the very highest standards. We had a fairly clear idea as to which pieces would be heard in the film, so we chose vocalists “to match” the operatic arias there. The selection process itself took quite some time, because not all stars were available, but I am really glad that we managed to work with

top soloists such as Philippe Jaroussky, Emöke Baráth, Raffaella Milanese, Simona Šaturová, and Krystian Adam.

**What is interesting about the music and vocals in this particular film?**

If a vocalist appears in the film, he or she is actually singing. The only exception to this rule was the character of Caterina Gabrielli, which is one of the main roles. She is voiced by soprano Simona Šaturová and played by the outstanding Italian actress Barbara Ronchi. There was no standard lip-synching involved, though, because Barbara Ronchi learned her role with a singing coach, lyrics and breathing and all, and tried to understand the physiognomy of singing. As a result, the shots in which she “sings” come across as incredibly authentic.

We first recorded the music with Collegium 1704 at Prague Crossroads. The result showed which arias would work best in certain parts of the film, and then everything was played again and sung for the film live. It was a challenging operation that is unprecedented in Czech film.

**Who do you think is the target group of *Il Boemo*?**

*Il Boemo* is for everyone who loves beauty. It's about the visual beauty that the audiences can enjoy thanks to authentic period sets, the beauty of the music, in which Collegium 1704 and I were able to play our part, and the beauty of the powerful story of the main character.

**Václav Luks, conductor**







## Global opera stars performing in the film:

### **Philippe Jaroussky**

the most admired French countertenor of his generation

### **Emöke Baráth**

Hungarian soprano, much sought-after as a performer of Baroque music

### **Simona Šaturová**

soprano of Slovak origin who has achieved international renown as an interpreter of Mozart; for many years, she has been promoting and performing Mysliveček's music

### **Raffaella Milanesi**

Italian soprano, one of the most sought-after soloists in the field of Baroque music

### **Juan Sancho**

Spanish tenor who feels at home singing the Baroque repertoire and concentrates mainly on Bach, Handel, and Monteverdi

### **Krystian Adam**

Polish tenor with a broad repertoire – Monteverdi, Purcell, Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Gluck, and Schubert

### **Sophie Harmsen**

an internationally successful and respected mezzo-soprano of German origin





Who was Josef Mysliveček, known as

# IL BOEMO

and what secrets lie behind his dazzling success  
and subsequent fall into oblivion?



## THE LIFE OF JOSEF MYSLIVEČEK

A native of Prague, Josef Mysliveček (1737–1781) **became one of the leading musical personalities in the whole of Europe**, in spite of all expectations. In his time, he was **the most sought-after opera composer in Italy** and can be described without exaggeration as having been the most celebrated artist of Czech origin in the 18th century. He collaborated with the vocal stars of his time and **influenced Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart himself**. His music continues to fascinate listeners to this day with its energy, ingenuity, and emotional depth.

Josef Mysliveček was most likely born **in Sova Mills** in Kampa on 9 March 1737. His father Matěj Mysliveček was a wealthy and influential miller, and his mother Anna Terezie also came from a family of millers. In addition to a twin brother, Jáchym, Mysliveček also had a sister, Maria Anna, who entered a convent in adulthood. Jáchym made a living as a miller in Prague until his death.

We know for a fact that the family was wealthy and materially secure. Josef probably attended the Dominican school at the Church of St. Giles,

where he also likely received music lessons. After this, he appears to have switched to the Jesuit college in Klementinum, where great emphasis was placed on the musical prowess of students. We know that he enrolled at Charles-Ferdinand University but left after the first year because he “made no progress in logic”. He subsequently **learned the trade**, studying hydraulics and mathematical subjects, among others, as required of the millers of that time. He completed his studies, was admitted to the Prague Guild as a master miller, and began working in the family mills.







## CAREER IN ITALY

Until he was twenty-five, Mysliveček did not focus on music to any great extent. At that stage, he decided to change his path in life and become a **composer and violin virtuoso**. He first completed his **musical education in Prague with František Václav Habermann and Josef Seger** and began writing his own compositions surprisingly quickly – his oldest surviving work is the successful **Symphony in C Major**. Italian education, however, was indispensable for opera composers of that time.

Mysliveček **left for Italy in the autumn of 1763**. He made for **Venice**, probably because the Italian operas which were performed in Prague and the vocalists who sang in them were often of Venetian provenance. During his time in Italy, Mysliveček travelled from city to city, composing for various theatres. He was primarily associated with **Teatro San Carlo in Naples**, the most prestigious European stage of its time, and it was in this esteemed theatre that more of Mysliveček's operas were performed than anywhere else.

Mysliveček's **first opera** for Naples, *Il Bellerofonte*, met with **enthusiastic reception**. The main roles were performed by tenor **Anton Raaff** and soprano **Caterina Gabrielli**, two of the most famous opera stars of the age. **The positive response to the opera led to commissions for many other Italian theatres, including Florence, Rome, Venice, Turin, and Bologna.**

Mysliveček also achieved great success in Munich. In 1777, he presented his opera *Ezio* at the local court and also his oratorio *Isacco, figura del redentore*, that **“the whole of Munich”** was still talking about six months later, as **Wolfgang Mozart** noted in a letter.





MYSLIVĚČEK  
and MOZART





**The surviving correspondence tells us of a number of meetings between the two composers.**

Myslivoček first met Mozart and his father Leopold in Bologna in 1770, when the fourteen-year-old Wolfgang was working on the opera **Mitridate, re di Ponto**, which was to be performed in Milan. Theirs was a very friendly relationship, the **young Mozart admired Mysliveček** and was **grateful for the experience** that the older artist was passing on to him about composition. Mysliveček even tried to use his contacts to **secure commissions for Mozart in Italy.**

**Myslivoček and Wolfgang Mozart met for the last time in Munich**, by which time Mysliveček was already seriously ill. Mozart visited him in hospital and wrote about the meeting in a letter to his father in great detail and with strong emotion. The friendship between Mysliveček and the Mozarts cooled off later on when Mysliveček was unable to fulfil his promise of getting Wolfgang a commission for an opera at Teatro San





Carlo.

**Mozart** returned to the genre of opera seria at the end of his life, when he composed the opera ***La clemenza di Tito***, which premiered at the Estates Theatre in Prague in 1791 on the occasion of the coronation of Leopold II as Bohemian king. Mysliveček had set the same libretto some seventeen years earlier.

A comparison in terms of recognition is inescapable. The Czech, a generation older, **achieved stellar success in Italian theatres in his own lifetime**. Although Mozart later attempted to do the same, he never managed to achieve a breakthrough in Italy. Again, their posthumous fates were almost entirely the opposite, only this time the other way round. While **Mozart became one of the world's most renowned composers after his death, Mysliveček was almost completely forgotten for more than two centuries**.



## FINAL YEARS

In the final years of his life, Mysliveček suffered from **major health problems** and pain caused by progressive syphilis. In spite of this, however, he continued to compose operas and instrumental music. Three years before his death, he presented one of his **best operas of all, *L'Olimpiade***, which was played in honour of the name day of the King of Spain.

Apart from his illness, Mysliveček also faced **financial difficulties** and had to resort to taking out several loans from a paupers' bank. It is not known exactly when he died, but there is a record of his funeral in Rome, in the Church of San Lorenzo in Lucina, on 4 February 1781, a date which soon came to be accepted as the date of his death. He left behind virtually no possessions, and the priest who recorded his funeral took Mysliveček to be a 65-year-old man, when in reality the composer did not even live to **the age of forty-four**.









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Il Boemo - příběh Josefa  
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