

THERE IS NO BETTER PLACE TO LOSE EVERYTHING

P U S T I N A

directors

IVAN ZACHARIÁŠ & ALICE NELLIS

EIGHT-PART MINISERIES PRODUCED BY HBO EUROPE

HBO



“IT WILL BE THE TELEVISION EVENT
OF THE SEASON.”

Karel Och, Artistic Director IFF Karlovy Vary

CRIME DRAMA

P U S T I N A

Set in the bleak landscape of Northern Bohemia, blending social realism, intense psychological drama and a riveting mystery, this original production is visually powerful, grippingly atmospheric and deeply moving.

The Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) will be the first event to screen all eight episodes in a festival premiere.

THERE IS NO BETTER PLACE TO LOSE
EVERYTHING

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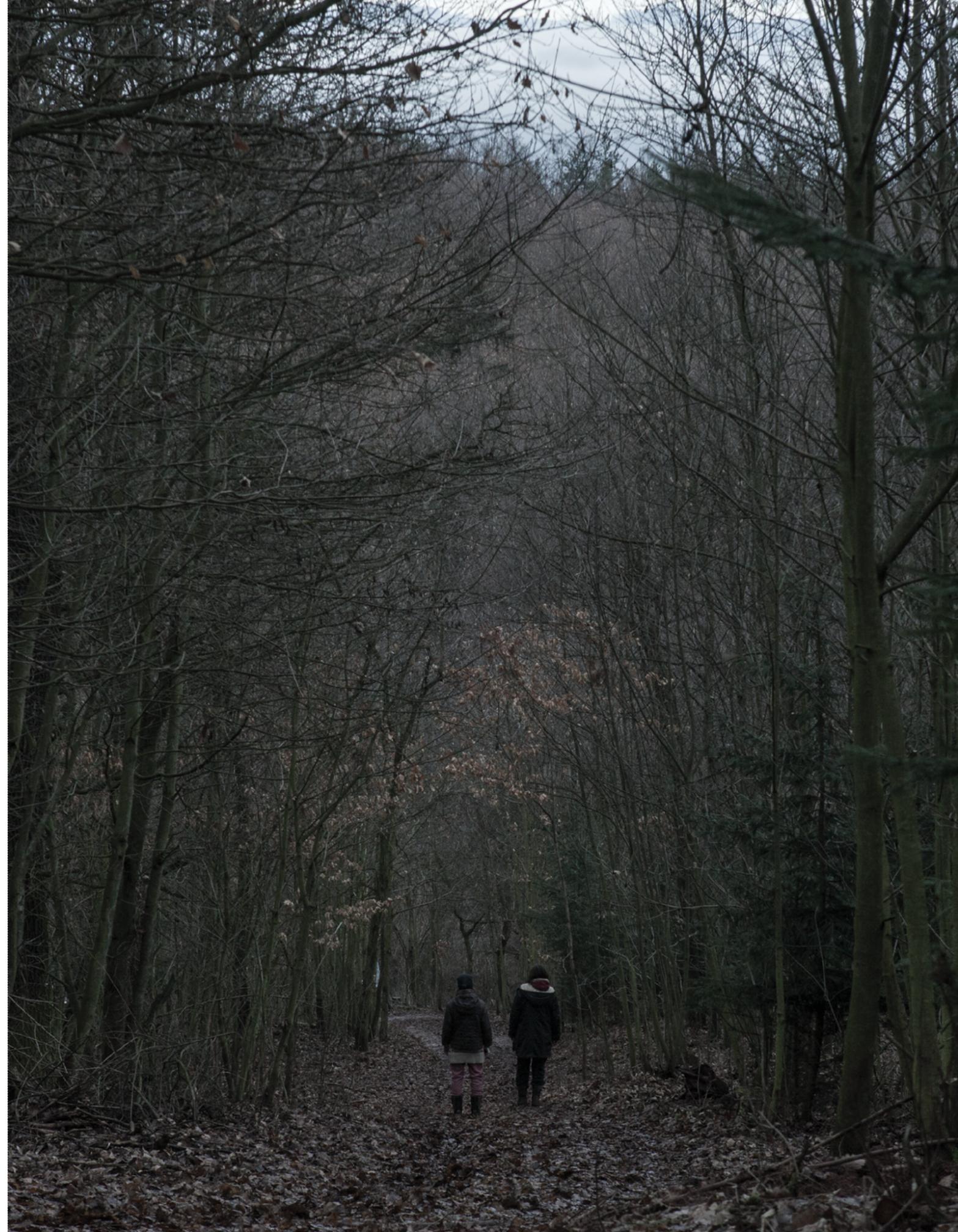
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P U S T I N A (W A S T E L A N D)

is the latest in a line of ambitious original drama series from HBO Europe. In the Czech Republic it follows the highly successful miniseries Burning Bush, the romantic comedy Head over Heels, the conspiracy thriller Mammon and three seasons of the confessional therapy series In Treatment.





G E N E R A L
S Y N O P S I S



The series opens with an event that will have a life-changing effect on all the members of a close-knit, multi-generational village community in Northern Bohemia. Just as the mayor of Pustina, Hana Sikorova, reaches the peak of her struggle against a large, foreign mining company that is eager to access the huge coal reserves that lie beneath the village, and is offering villagers attractive compensation in exchange for selling their homes, her fourteen-year old daughter Misha goes missing. As long-standing family relationships begin to disintegrate, Hana starts to doubt the integrity of every member of her community. Initially helpful in the desperate search for the missing Misa, the citizens of Pustina soon begin to reveal their true colors.



C R E A T O R S

directors

IVAN ZACHARIÁŠ, ALICE NELLIS

script

ŠTĚPÁN HULÍK

producers HBO Europe

TEREZA POLACHOVÁ, STEVE MATTHEWS, ANTONY ROOT

producers nutprodukce

PAVLA JANOUŠKOVÁ KUBEČKOVÁ, TOMÁŠ HRUBÝ

line producer Etamp

JAN BÍLEK

directors of photography

ŠTĚPÁN KUČERA, MATĚJ CIBULKA

production design

MILAN BÝČEK

music

DAVID BOULTER

sound

JAKUB ČECH, PETR ČECHÁK, PAVEL REJHOLEC

editing

FILIP MALÁSEK, VLADIMÍR BARÁK

costume designer

SIMONA RYBÁKOVÁ

make up designer

MILAN VLČEK

casting

MADLA ZACHARIÁŠOVÁ

C A S T

Hana
ZUZANA STIVÍNOVÁ

Karel
JAROSLAV DUŠEK

Klára
ELIŠKA KŘENKOVÁ

Rajner
LEOŠ NOHA

Lukáš
JAN CINA

Adam
ŠTĚPÁN BENONI

Vašíčková
EVA HOLUBOVÁ

Vašíček
MIROSLAV VLADYKA

Filip Paskowski /Pásek/
OSKAR HES

Dejv
ADAM PETRLÍK

Tibor Balog
JANEK GREGOR

Sysel
JAN BAVALA

Horváth
MÁRIO PECH

Kučera
MAXMILIÁN MRÁZ

Krušina
IVAN KRÚPA

Mikulík
CTIRAD GOTZ

Tovaryš
OLDŘICH VLACH

Abrham
MARTIN SITTA

Cetkovski
MARTIN KUBAČÁK

Masařová
PETRA ŠPALKOVÁ

Krušinová
PETRA ŠPINDLEROVÁ

Tovaryšová
ZDENA HADRBOLECOVÁ

Mikulíková
JITKA SEDLÁČKOVÁ

Abrhamová
KATEŘINA PINDEJOVÁ

Lucka
ANITA KRAUSOVÁ

Kwiatkowski
RICHARD STANKE

Rudi
TOMÁŠ DASTLÍK

Citrón (Lemon)
JAN JANKOVSKÝ

policeman
KAREL ZIMA

policeman
PETR VANČURA

redskin
FILIP KAŇKOVSKÝ

Jakub Masař
ŠTĚPÁN MATĚJÍČKA

Petrželka
PAVEL ŠIMČÍK

Vojta Krušina
TOMÁŠ BRICHTA

Lipovský
ROMAN SKAMENE

Miškovský
JAKUB SLACH

Filip's father
ADRIAN JASTRABAN

redskin's girlfriend
KAMILA TRNKOVÁ





S Y N O P S I S

EPISODE ONE



Mayor of Pustina Hana Sikorova makes a shocking discovery in the woods behind the village. It may be connected to her battle against the expansion of a nearby coalmine. She then travels to a municipal government meeting called to decide on whether to hold a referendum about mining expansion. Simultaneously, the police bring back to Pustina's juvenile detention center escaped juvenile delinquent Balog,

suggesting that he may have something to do with the forest discovery. The municipal meeting draws to a close and Hana fails in her attempt to stop the calling of a referendum. At the same time, she finds out that her fourteen year old daughter Misha hasn't come back from school and tries to find her with the help of her other daughter Klara. When all attempts fail, they decide to ask their neighbors for help.

EPISODE TWO



The criminal police launch an investigation into Misha's disappearance. Hana is shocked when they tell her that her daughter's disappearance may be connected to sixteen-year old Filip Paskowski, who had escaped from the juvenile detention center in Pustina the night before. The

police also question Misha's mentally ill father, Karel, Hana's former husband. A warden at the detention centre, Adam, finds out that Misha's disappearance is not only connected to Filip's escape but also directly to his own family.

EPISODE THREE



Hana finds out from Filip Paskowski that the day she went missing Misha was supposed to visit her father at his country cottage. Armed with this information, Hana confronts Karel, who once again denies knowing anything about Misha's whereabouts. Meanwhile in the detention

center Balog pressures Filip to tell him what he had told Hana; it seems he's afraid of something. Adam secretly follows his brother Lukas, boyfriend to Hana's second daughter Klara, to discover that he leads a shocking double life.

EPISODE FOUR



The police discover additional information about Karel. Everything seems to suggest that Karel is lying about Misha's disappearance and other events that happened that day. At the same time, Klara too discovers inconsistencies in Lukas's

story about himself and his relationship with Misha. At the detention center, Balog and Filip come to blows, while the police arrive at Karel's cottage. What they find there completely upends the investigation.

EPISODE FIVE



While being interrogated, Karel tries to convince the police that he has nothing to do with Misha's disappearance. He is upset that no one believes him. Finally,

Karel is released, against police wishes, following an intervention by the district attorney. He hastens to see Hana and Klara to convince them of his innocence.

EPISODE SIX



Hana tries to find out the truth about Karel; what he knows about their daughter but also about his own past, which he had kept hidden from her. In the meantime, and despite ongoing events, the village prepares

for the upcoming referendum. Shortly after Balog celebrates his 18 birthday and is released from detention, unexpected and shocking news arrives about Misha.

EPISODE SEVEN



Karel tries to find out what really happened to Misha. He suspects that one of the guys in Pustina, cab driver Abraham, may know something. He gradually discovers a trail leading from Abraham to the detention

center and the mining company. But no one, including Hana, believes Karel, and so he has no choice but to try and uncover the truth on his own.

EPISODE EIGHT



The police come back to Pustina to close the case. They seem to hold all the necessary evidence to do so. But Karel is convinced they are on the wrong track. He understands

that if he wants justice served, he has to take everything into his own hands. When Hana finds out she tries to stop him.





Hana

ZUZANA STIVÍNOVÁ

Your character experiences powerful emotional moments. Was it hard to prepare for them?

Pustina is exceptionally well written by Stepan Hulik, and that's fundamental. It's easier to prepare, because you aren't fighting anything or anyone and you can focus or sometimes just act and trust your intuition and the time we had spent in preparation. Yes, there were a few scenes that felt like I was "smashing my head against a wall", but I had such good directors that I had the luxury to take risks and there was nothing to be afraid of.

Pustina touches upon particular social issues of a village community. Can they be applied to real life as well?

It's hard to say unequivocally. Pustina is made up of eight episodes because the issues it explores are very complicated. I am personally pleased that I don't have them in real life, but I believe that many viewers will identify with them because they are universal and timeless.

How does the environment the miniseries is set in influence the characters' actions?

Pustina = Wasteland = no man's land, nowhere, on the edge of nothingness... very concrete and at the same time very abstract. The place definitely determines our actions and way of thinking, but I still feel that there's some hope, a bit of light, a way out... who knows?!

In your opinion, how does Wasteland differ from other domestic series?

It's not just a television production, or eight small boxes. It's essentially three feature films. Pustina is generous in every way.

How would you categorize Pustina in your filmography?

Before and after Pustina!!! It was my 'dream job'! It was an important chunk of my life, both personally and professionally.

Was working with HBO different from your other experiences as an actress?

Incomparable! Prep work, process, wrapping up, everything was weightier, more professional and at the same time kinder, not because I am older and kinder myself, but because HBO Europe really cares, is interested and way ahead of its competition. Form me their interest and focus were key.

How did you prepare for this role?

My preparation consisted of starting from the beginning, without experience, without drawing comparisons with previous work assignments. Without drawing on the external like I'd done in many previous projects. I made an effort not to make an effort but instead focus on the "here and now". Director Ivan Zacharias and I then consulted on "body-language" of my role, but it's also about breathing, serenity and imagination. Sometimes the saying "less is more" is really true!

Zuzana Stivínová is a Czech theatre, film and television actress. She won praise for her performance in the world premiere of Vaclav Havel's play *Leaving*; the jazz opera *A Walk Worthwhile* directed by Milos Forman; as Sally Bowles in *Cabaret*; and Justine in *The Mighty Magician*, for which she was awarded the Radok Theatre Award. Throughout her distinguished acting career she has worked with great European theatre directors such as Otomar Krejca and Jiri Grossman, from portraying Varvara in *The Cherry Orchard* to Desdemona in *Othello*. She has starred in numerous feature films, and collaborated with movie directors Vera Chytilova and Jan Nemeč among others. She has received several nominations for the Czech Film Academy Award and in 2013 for the Golden Nymph Award as outstanding actress at the Monte Carlo International Television Festival. Zuzana comes from a musical family, and is herself a singer. In the last several years she has produced a series of her own concerts, performing in Europe, New York and Philadelphia.





director

I V A N Z A C H A R I Á Š

Why did you choose Pustina as your feature debut?

That's simple. Because I liked Stepan Hulik's script. It's a powerful theme – it's not superficial. I knew right away what the whole thing should look like and what the atmosphere be. That's always a good sign.

How was shooting the series for HBO Europe different from your experiences shooting commercials?

It's totally different. You can't compare, even if the profession is the same. I had total freedom and I was fortunate in the selection of actors and crew. It was a pleasure.

Did you try to follow a visual style of European or American television dramas? What precisely inspired you?

No, I hardly watched any TV series. Rather, I wanted our series to look like a film. I wouldn't enjoy merely copying something.

In your opinion, what is exceptional about Pustina?

I don't know if it's exceptional. But I hope it's realistic. That was my priority, to have everything look realistic and not like some kind of fake fiction. That's the only way to reach your audience.

How would you assess your collaboration with HBO? Was it exceptional in any way, did it go beyond your previous experiences abroad?

The collaboration was perfect – and I'm not just being polite. Honestly, I couldn't imagine it any better. I had absolute freedom and support in my work.

The current trend in quality TV, a tradition especially in the United States, tends to put the medium of feature film and television on equal footing. Can this equation be applied to Pustina?

I hope so. I put effort into just that...

Graduated in documentary filmmaking at Prague's FAMU [Film Academy] (1996). Gradually, he became one of the most sought after commercial directors and received a number of prestigious awards for his commercial made for top advertising companies in the world. His short parodying Bollywood movies *Mulit* (2003) is part of MOMA's permanent collection. He also makes the spots for the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. HBO Europe's crime drama *Wasteland* is his feature directorial debut.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 1994 ROOM BY THE TRACKS (student film)
- 2003 MULIT
- 2010 COPPA DI SICILIA
- 2016 WASTELAND (television series)





director

A L I C E N E L L I S

Pustina is not your first television project. Was shooting the series for HBO Europe different from your existing experiences?

My television experiences are more in the area of documentaries, which are a completely different genre and a different way of filming. I was very pleasantly surprised that both crew and the technical amenities were as good, and often better, than I am used to from film projects.

You are co-directing Pustina. Did you and director Ivan Zacharias discuss how to work on individual scenes, and their stylistic continuity?

The fact that Ivan was co-directing is one of the reasons I took the job. I was interested to see how he shoots. I was interested in his artistic vision, which is not weighted down by a particular routine or a stipulated recipe. Before we started filming we talked for a long time – I liked Ivan's vision, and because he shot the first two episodes, I followed the dailies, the way he prepared a take, etc. so that there would be continuity on my part and at the same time find what is familiar to me and what I enjoy dramatically-speaking. Of course during filming per se it was more about mutual trust and understanding.

Looking at your filmography, Pustina is quite a significant shift toward another genre. How did you approach this darkly moody and often cruel narrative?

Pustina is dark, but also poetic. It's like watching a shadowy stream with its own secret and therefore its own beauty and appeal. It's a story full of suspense, but the main feeling you as a viewer walk away with, I think, is gratitude that your own situation (for the most part) isn't as complicated, dark and cruel as this. As far as genre is concerned – I like change. I think every story needs a different way of being told, its own genre. And to close myself off and work in just one genre, I'd consider that dangerous; as an author and as a person.

What was your first thought when you finished reading the script?

To go and look at my sleeping children.

What makes Pustina exceptional in your opinion, how will it speak to the audience?

For me, Pustina blends a distinct visual narrative and powerful acting, both doing their best to complement each other in fulfilling the need of the script, which is what the whole thing stands on. I believe that the script was exceptional from the beginning. I don't like reading scripts but I enjoyed this one from the very start. That doesn't usually happen.

»

How much does shooting a miniseries differ from shooting a feature film?

A miniseries gives you a chance to develop the characters more widely, to enjoy the subtlety of transitions, phases – in a story that you need to tell in about 100 minutes you know that every appearance, every door that opens, every glance (even if in and of itself significant) will, for the most part, end up on the cutting floor, because everything needs to rush forward for the sake of narrative. A miniseries has the advantage that, for dramatic purposes, you can rush it like an action-packed movie when necessary, but then slow it down, let the story take a breath, let the characters live. I believe it may be one of the reasons why miniseries are becoming an ever more popular, fully autonomous and artistically fully recognized format. As far as shooting is concerned, it's logically longer than when you do a film, but in our case Ivan and I were very lucky to have an extraordinary crew, that worked flawlessly for the full six months and at the end it was almost impossible for all of us to imagine that we will no longer see each other regularly as a group. It was exhausting, we were often cold, but it was an experience.

She's an established Czech director, whose award-winning films earned critical and audience acclaim. She graduated with a degree in English and American Studies from Charles University, followed by a degree in screenwriting from FAMU. She's also a successful theatre director. Together with Ivan Zacharias she co-directed HBO Europe's crime drama Pustina.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 1999 ENE BENE
- 2002 ROAD MOVIE
- 2007 SECRETS
- 2010 MAMAS & PAPAS
- 2011 PERFECT DAYS
- 2013 INNOCENT LIES (television series)
- 2015 THE SEVEN RAVENS
- 2016 GOOD GUYS (in production)
- 2016 WASTELAND (miniseries)





screenplay

Š T Ě P Á N H U L Í K

Originally from Uherské Hradiště, he studied film at Charles University, followed by screenwriting and dramaturgy at FAMU. He won the Magnesia Litera Discovery of the Year award for his book Cinematography of Forgetting (2011) that mapped out the state of Czech film in the era of normalization. The drama Burning Bush (2013) was his first realized screenplay, awarded with a Golden Lion. Wasteland is his second collaboration with HBO Europe.

This is your second collaboration with HBO Europe. Try to describe working on a completely different theme.

Following Burning Bush, I – along with the producers Tomas Hruby and Pavla Janoušková Kubečková and our colleague Lukáš Kokeš – realized how much we are attracted to the possibility of creating our own world from the foundations up and in that world tell a completely original story. We tried to create Pustina as a place totally familiar to the viewer without being able to place it exactly. We met regularly for more than a year and together created the skeleton of the whole story. We asked ourselves: What excites us? What really interests us and what annoys us. What frightens us? And how to fit it into Pustina. As always, research was very important: when I write a script, I need to have everything researched and fact-checked in detail. I cross-examined a few mayors of small villages to find out what their work is all about. We conducted long interviews with criminal investigators; we visited juvenile delinquency centers and talked to local caretakers and their wards to soak up the atmosphere. Of course we also traveled to the border area, which is where we wanted to set the story.

Burning Bush meant writing about real life stories set in a historical context, but Pustina is pure fiction. What was important to concentrate on this time?

I probably partly answered in the previous question. Generally, the most important thing to focus on when I was writing, were the characters. We hope the viewers will enjoy the unexpected twists and turns, and the guesswork of what will happen next. But the compelling and varied characters should be what they most remember after they've watched the show. It was important that we slowly uncover their individual layers, to keep the viewer guessing. Just when you thought you knew a character, he or she will do something that will make them totally different in your eyes. We wanted to get to the crux of the matter, to explore what is inside us, how far we are willing to go under pressure. And with all this hopefully provoke the viewer into asking how they themselves would act under similar circumstances.

»

It took you a few years to finish writing the script for Pustina. How much was its final version affected by your collaboration with HBO Europe's Steve Matthews?

Steve's contribution to Pustina was key. I can say without exaggeration that Pustina would not exist without him. Sometime around the latter part of the second thirds of the series we reached a dead end. We had no idea how to continue. We knew how the story should end (we had that in our heads from the very beginning), but suddenly we weren't sure how to reach that planned ending. Steve walked in with a clear head and helped us discover what had been in Pustina all along, but what we'd been ignoring. He helped us bring the hidden themes to the fore, and that helped us find the way to the finish line. Beyond that Steve kept bringing in great and very helpful ideas. Along with Mrs. Marcela Pittermanová, who left her thumbprint also on Pustina, Steve is the absolutely best producer I've ever met. I hope we'll keep working together.

The series takes place in a harsh present-day social environment of a village and, among other things, describes in great detail how a juvenile delinquency institution works. Where did you look for inspiration?

If you're asking about all those "colorful" village details, those were not hard to come by or make up. My parents live in a village and I myself spend a lot of time there. I am familiar with it. As far as juvenile detention is concerned, it mystifies me too a bit. I wrote the first version of the script, which we gave to our consultant and warden at a juvenile center to read. He asked me who had helped me with the dialogues and with conjuring up that world and its rules, because he said that it corresponded exactly to reality. I had to admit that I simply wrote it as I felt it and that it came to me quite naturally. I don't know what it says about me that I can imagine these types of things so colorfully, but I am afraid it's not nice.

In the miniseries you hint at the moral stances and limits of individual characters. Is this our standard answer to extreme situations?

We would probably need to define what is "standard" and what is "extreme". Every person has his/her own boundaries. Some people will behave like total assholes under the least bit of pressure while others won't no matter what. Generally, I'd say none of us know what is inside us until we had our own trial by fire. The basic rule is "know thyself". But that's very difficult and I think most of us will not know our own deepest depth and darkness our whole life. Sadly – or maybe thank goodness.

Why did you decide on the title Pustina for the miniseries?

In the beginning my colleagues and I thought about having the story take place on the Czech-Polish border, near Jeseníky. I looked at the map and found out that there are a lot of villages named Žulové (Ore Village), Jedlová (Fir Village), Písečná (Sand Village), Uhelná (Coal Village). It seemed right that our village too should have a name that already means something. That instantly evokes an emotion. The name Pustina (Wasteland), given the storyline, seemed absolutely perfect for our purposes.





executive producer

T E R E Z A P O L A C H O V Á

As an Executive Producer at HBO Europe since 2010, Tereza Polachová has been instrumental in the success of the first and second season of 'Terapie' (In Treatment I, 2011; In Treatment II, 2013), a three-part drama by renowned Polish director Agnieszka Holland 'Hořící keř' (Burning Bush, 2013), daring contemporary Jan Hřebejk series 'Až po uši' (Head Over Heels, 2014), and the 2015 drama 'Mamon'. She just finished an eight-part criminal drama, 'Pustina' (Wasteland, 2016).

How can Pustina captivate an audience beyond the framework of current television dramas?

On a domestic scale it is most definitely an exceptional project whose development and production took longer than usual. We placed big emphasis on the visuals and I hope that as a result audiences will feel like they are watching a feature film rather than a series. In parts it is very dark and emotionally charged, I believe that audiences will be completely absorbed by it.

Do you think Pustina will have an emotional impact on viewers abroad?

Yes, I do. It's a powerful story that, though it's local, is nonetheless a universal story and could take place anywhere in the world. You can find a godforsaken place like this anywhere. International audiences can thus identify with it. When we choose subject matter we want to develop we always look at whether local as well as international audiences could connect with it. HBO is in 19 countries in Europe, each with a different language and HBO cannot afford to make series or films that would interest only audiences in one particular country where the series takes place.

Pustina is a project that evolved over several years. How did your role as creative producer change during individual phases of the development?

Following the success of Burning Bush, we knew that we'd like to continue working with Štěpán Hulík. Pustina was, in part, made-to-order; we were looking for a genre that would be interesting both for HBO and for Štěpán. And then Štěpán came with this story. Making Pustina was a long process. We didn't want to rush anything. The script alone took three years to write. Its development was the labor of many people, naming them all would take up a lot of space. Everyone involved has my deepest gratitude. And given that HBO was at the creation of the miniseries, it was intensively involved in all phases of the production process, from script development to finding a suitable director, casting and production in general.

»

We searched for a fitting director for a long time, we wanted someone who'd bring something new to the table and visually move the project in an unpredictable direction, beyond what a TV viewer is usually exposed to. That's why we chose Ivan Zacharias, even though it was a risk on HBO's part because Ivan, though a very experienced director, spent most of his career making commercials. We were then looking for a veteran director to pair him up with. I was glad that we got to work with Alice Nellis who, in contrast, has a lot of experience in film and television. I spent almost four years of my life with Pustina. That's why I try to surround myself with people whom I can trust 100%, which makes working together a lot simpler."





executive producer

S T E V E M A T T H E W S

Steve was Consulting Producer on all three series of Neil Jordan's series *The Borgias* for Showtime Networks. For Octagon Films he has also produced four series of RTE's award winning Dublin gangster series *Love/Hate*. He was formerly Head of Development at Ray Winstone's Size 9 Productions, he worked as a script editor at the BBC on *Silent Witness* and was co-creator and producer of Channel 5's late night horror series *Urban Gothic*. Steve has been a guest lecturer at NYU's Tisch School of Arts, and was an external examiner for the screenwriting degree at Bournemouth University. He is currently Executive Producer, Drama Development at HBO Europe.

What are the current HBO Europe ambitions within the original production field?

HBO Europe intends to continue its exciting and ambitious output across its territories. We will develop and produce more series and miniseries projects in the core central European countries, and we are also starting new development slates in Scandinavia and in the Adria region. HBO is committed to finding and encouraging new creative voices and supporting them in telling their stories.

There is a boom of drama series going on in Europe following the tradition of so called quality tv. Do you think Pustina is a worthy successor to this tradition?

Certainly European television is in a "golden age" – but I don't think *Pustina* is a successor to anything, it is its own unique piece of storytelling! Brilliantly written, mysterious and profound with an amazing cast, world class production and exquisitely directed, *Pustina* is, I think, a new benchmark for European TV. It was a privilege to be involved in the show and has inspired me to help find and support more stories from the amazing talent that we are working with across the region.



N U T P R O D U K C E

Nutprodukce is a production company in Prague that came from the desire of young producers (Tomáš Hrubý, Pavla Janoušková Kubečková) to try and come up with a new approach to film and television production. In the short time of its existence, nutprodukce won several Czech Lions and prestigious festival awards. It's very first feature project was the miniseries Burning Bush (2013), realized by nutprodukce for HBO Europe. It appealed to Polish director Agnieszka Holland in particular for its exceptional abilities to treat historical narratives in an original, authentic and pathos-free manner, its world renown and, least but not last, its personal involvement with a story. Pustina is its fifth project in a successful collaboration with HBO Europe.

»

producer

PAVLA JANOUŠKOVÁ KUBEČKOVÁ

producer

TOMÁŠ HRUBÝ

Could you explain what the difference was working with HBO on Pustina as opposed to Burning Bush?

While Stepan Hulik came with a largely finished treatment for Burning Bush, Pustina was a work-in-progress from the very beginning and HBO got involved at its onset. The project's success depended not only on a generous budget but also the special involvement by HBO professionals – especially producers Steve Matthews, Tereza Polachová and Antony Root.

What makes this story/subject matter potentially interesting to audiences abroad?

Pustina is a story that takes place in a specific location, a coalmine in the former Sudetenland in northern Bohemia, where the ambiance and visuals are captivating. This makes the series purely Czech. But the basic storylines, ethical, moral dilemmas and conflicting ideas could just as well take place in any economically depressed region battling poverty and a landscape devastated by heavy industry – for example the Rust Belt in the US or the north of England.





HBO Europe is available to subscribers in nineteen European countries, in central and Eastern Europe, the Netherlands and Scandinavia.

Original production started in 2007 with a Polish documentary, now both drama series and documentaries are produced in Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland; documentaries in Slovenia and Croatia, and drama development is underway in the Balkan countries and Scandinavia.

Drama for HBO in Europe started in 2010 with the In Treatment format which has been successful in Romania, Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland; additional formats produced by HBO Europe include Shall we Kiss, Mammon and Small Time Gangster, which have achieved both critical and audience acclaim in their own countries as well as achieving notable international sales.

Original scripted drama began in 2012, with the three-part miniseries Burning Bush, directed by Agnieszka Holland and written by Štěpán Hulík, who has also written Pustina (Wasteland).

Burning Bush (Hořící keř) has been shown at major festivals around the world, including Toronto in 2013; its international sales achieved major success, a first for a Czech-language tv drama.

From producing the first documentary and drama format programming, HBO Europe also now actively researches and produces drama programming from the region; Wataha, from HBO Poland, was so successful in its own market it beat the global phenomenon Game of Thrones by a factor of three, and all of the locally produced HBO dramas have achieved notable success in their markets.

With Pustina (Wasteland) the eight hour original drama is setting the bar even higher; the inclusion of the entire series at the 2016 Toronto Film Festival is indeed an honour.

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