BAMcinémathek presents *Independent of Reality: The Films of Jan Nemec*, the first full-career US retrospective of the Czechoslovak New Wave director, Nov 8—14

Kicks off the national tour of the festival and features a week-long run of Nemec’s debut feature *Diamonds of the Night* in a new 35mm print

Nemec on skype for Q&A

*The Wall Street Journal* is the title sponsor for BAMcinémathek and BAM Rose Cinemas.

**Brooklyn, NY/Oct 10, 2013**—From Friday, November 8 through Thursday, November 14, BAMcinémathek presents *Independent of Reality: The Films of Jan Nemec*, the first full-career US retrospective of Czechoslovak New Wave director Jan Nemec (b. 1936). Over the years, BAMcinémathek has been a strong champion of Czech cinema; it has hosted a festival of New Czech Films on 12 separate occasions, presented the first US retrospective of Frantisek Vlacil (*Marketa Lazarova*) in 2002, and premiered a new 35mm print of Vera Chytilova’s *Daisies* for a week-long run last summer. Though Nemec (pronounced Niemetz) was an instrumental player in the Czechoslovak New Wave alongside Milos Forman, Jiri Menzel, Chytilova, and others, the *enfant terrible* of the movement is relatively unknown stateside. This long-overdue survey of Nemec’s nearly 50 year career of uncompromising work features 12 films and a week-long run of *Diamonds of the Night* (1964) in a new 35mm print. The retrospective premieres at BAMcinémathek and then embarks on a North American tour, curated by Irena Kovarova and produced by the Comeback Company in partnership with the National Film Archive, Prague, and Aerofilms.

The triumvirate of Nemec, Forman, and Menzel became the face of a new cinema rushing out of Czechoslovakia in the mid-1960s, with Chytilova, Passer and Juraj Herz following close behind. Though heralded as a new generation of masters abroad, their work did not always garner immediate recognition—Czechoslovak state authorities controlled film distribution to festivals and markets, and it could take two to three years before a film was available internationally.

Nemec’s debut feature *Diamonds of the Night* (1964) follows the escape of two concentration camp prisoners, depicting their existential journey through flashbacks and fantasies. The film premiered to instant acclaim and was invited to screen in Cannes’ Critics’ Week, but did not screen in New York until the Museum of Modern Art’s 1967 festival of Czechoslovak New Wave, followed by a commercial release in the US the following year. Hailed as “a remarkable directorial debut” with a “mood of desperation and paranoia [that] works a grim magic” (Dave Kehr, *Chicago Reader*), Nemec’s surrealist masterpiece screens daily for one week, and will be accompanied by his thesis film *A Loaf of Bread* (1960) on the opening night of the run. Like *Diamonds*, the short film is based on an autobiographical story by renowned Czech author Arnost Lustig.

Comprised of five short films by five directors, *Pearls of the Deep* (1966—Nov 11) was effectively a Czechoslovak New Wave manifesto, featuring segments by Chytilova, Menzel, and Nemec, among others. Based on a book by celebrated writer Bohumil Hrabal, the anthology was featured in the 1966 New York Film Festival. Nemec’s boldly absurdist *A Report on the Party and Guests* (1966—Nov 9) is a daring work about the mechanics of power. Perhaps his best known work today, the film outraged authorities and was quickly banned. With a range of influences from Robert Bresson to Alain Resnais, Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, and Luis Buñuel, *A Report* has been called “one of the best Czechoslovak films ever made” (*Renata Adler, The New York Times*). The events of 1968—the democratization process, the hopeful period of the Prague Spring, and the Warsaw Pact invasion that disrupted it—heightened the world’s attention toward Czech filmmaking. The Prague Spring allowed Nemec, Forman, and Menzel to be invited to compete at Cannes, but the French strikes and protests of May 1968 caused such turmoil...
that the festival was canceled before the jury could announce the awards. All three films were then presented in the main slate of the New York Film Festival along with Nemec’s short film *Oratorio for Prague* (1968—Nov 12), which depicts the Warsaw Pact invasion. The three-part cinephilic fantasy *Martyrs of Love* (1967—Nov 10) was Nemec’s last film to receive a US theatrical release (in 1969) through then-newcomer New Line Cinema.

Forbidden from working in film after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Nemec was forced into exile in 1974 and left for Germany where he was able to finally realize his long-denied project of filming Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* (1975—Nov 12), which makes its New York premiere in this series. Nemec lived in exile in the United States from 1977 to 1989, but his avant-garde filmmaking style and nonconformist personality made it difficult for him to break through in Hollywood. After several years spent teaching and working as a commercial videographer, Nemec returned to his native country following the Velvet Revolution in 1989.

Unlike many of his New Wave peers, Nemec has been even more prolific since 1989 than in his early career. Nemec turned the camera on himself with *Late Night Talks with Mother* (2001—Nov 13), a masterful nonfiction exploration of himself and his hometown of Prague which won the prestigious Golden Leopard award at Locarno. *Late Night Talks with Mother* and *Toyen* (2005—Nov 13; featuring an intro by lead actress Zuzana Stivinova), Nemec’s meditative portrait of the surrealist Czech painter, screen in their New York premieres in the series. Additional highlights include *The Ferrari Dino Girl* (2009—Nov 14), a look back at the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia through staged dramatizations and Nemec’s original footage of the events, and a free screening of *Golden Sixties* (2011—Nov 10), an illuminating portrait of Nemec from a 27-part television series about masters of the Czechoslovak New Wave.

For press information or to schedule an interview with the filmmaker, please contact:
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**Jan Nemec Schedule**

All films on rare imported archival 35mm prints, in Czech with English subtitles, and directed and written by Jan Nemec unless noted otherwise.

**Fri, Nov 8**
5, 9pm: *Diamonds of the Night*  
7pm: *Diamonds of the Night* + *A Loaf of Bread*

**Sat, Nov 9**
7pm: *A Report on the Party and Guests*  
9pm: *Diamonds of the Night*

**Sun, Nov 10**
2pm: *Golden Sixties: Jan Nemec*—free screening  
4:30pm: *Martyrs of Love* + *Mother and Son*  
7, 9pm: *Diamonds of the Night*

**Mon, Nov 11**
7pm: *Pearls of the Deep*  
9:30pm: *Diamonds of the Night*

**Tue, Nov 12**
7pm: *Metamorphosis* + *Oratorio for Prague*  
9:30pm: *Diamonds of the Night*

**Wed, Nov 13**
6pm: *Late Night Talks with Mother*  
7:45pm: *Toyen*
9:30pm: Diamonds of the Night

**Thu, Nov 14**
6, 9:30pm: Diamonds of the Night
7:30pm: The Ferrari Dino Girl

**Film Descriptions**

*Diamonds of the Night (Demanty noci)* (1964) 64min *New 35mm print!*
With Antonin Kumbera and Ladislav Jansky.
Nemec’s conviction that a director must create “a personal style” and “a world independent of reality as it appears at the time” was already evident in his first feature length film. *Diamonds* follows the escape of two young concentration camp prisoners through the woods of Sudetenland and the ensuing pursuit of them. Moving freely between the present, dreams, and flashbacks, Nemec employs an aesthetic of Pure Cinema to depict the state of the distressed human mind. *On the opening night of the run the film screens with A Loaf of Bread (Sousto)* (1960) 11min Based on a story by Arnost Lustig, Nemec’s graduation film follows the story of starving prisoners plotting to steal a piece of bread from a parked train in preparation for their escape (the subject of the director’s first feature). The film won an award at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen.

**Fri, Nov 8 at 5, 7, 9pm**
**Sat, Nov 9 at 9pm**
**Sun, Nov 10 at 7, 9pm**
**Mon, Nov 11 at 9:30pm**
**Tues, Nov 12 at 9:30pm**
**Wed, Nov 13 at 9:30pm**
**Thu, Nov 14 at 6, 9:30pm**

*The Ferrari Dino Girl (Holka Ferrari Dino)* (2009) 68min
With Karel Roden, Jan Budar, Tammy Sunquist, Jan Nemec.
While shooting a documentary about the exciting and hopeful period known as the Prague Spring, Nemec and his crew found themselves watching and filming in horror as the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Along with his friend, the titular Ferrari Dino Girl, and her boyfriend with diplomatic passport, Nemec smuggled the resulting four reels of footage of the events for the rest of the world to see. This film returns to the escape route, dramatizing the director’s account of the days and presenting all the original footage shot during the invasion for the first time. *Digibeta.*

**Thu, Nov 14 at 7:30pm**

*Golden Sixties: Jan Nemec (Zlata sedesata)* (2011) 58min *NY Premiere!*
Directed by Martin Sulik.
An illuminating portrait of Nemec from a 27-part TV series about masters of the Czechoslovak New Wave. *Digibeta.*

**Sun, Nov 10 at 2pm Free screening! Skype Q&A with Jan Nemec**

*Late Night Talks with Mother (Nocni hovory s matkou)* (2001) 68min *NY Premiere!*
With Jan Nemec, Karel Roden, Ester Krumbachova, Zuzana Stivinova, Vaclav Havel.
After his return from exile, Nemec delved immediately into filmmaking. Unlike his generational peers, he did not rely on existing structures and began producing films independently, continuing to develop a personal style without regard for generally accepted rules. Experimenting with digital video formats, this counterpart to Kafka’s *Letter to Father* finds the director probing his own psyche in the form of a confessional dialogue with his long deceased mother. Nemec turns a fish-eye lens on himself and his birthplace of Prague to create an experimental personal essay film, an “autodocumentary,” which the jury at Locarno International Film Festival recognized with a Golden Leopard for the best video film in 2001. *Digibeta.*

**Wed, Nov 13 at 6pm**

*Martyrs of Love (Mucednici lasky)* (1967) 71min
With Marta Kubisova, Hana Kuberova, Jan Klusak, Karel Gott, Josef Konicek.

This three-part ballad, which often uses music to stand in for dialogue, remains the most perfect embodiment of Nemec's vision of a film world independent of reality. Mounting a defense of timid, inhibited, clumsy, and unsuccessful individuals, the three protagonists are a complete antithesis of the industrious heroes of socialist aesthetics. *Martys of Love* cemented Nemec's reputation as the kind of unrestrained nonconformist the Communist establishment considered the most dangerous to their ideology. Winning an award at the Locarno International Film Festival in 1968, the film became the first release of New Line Cinema. Screens with *Mother and Son (Moeder en zoon)* (1967) 10min This absurdist tale about a doting mother of a brutal torturer was shot without the permission of Czechoslovak authorities on a special commission from the Amsterdam Film Festival and later won the main award at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen. *Digibeta.*

Sun, Nov 10 at 4:30pm

**Metamorphosis (Die Verwandlung)** (1975) 52min NY Premiere!

*With Heinz Bennet, Zdenka Prochazkova, Edwige Pierre.*

Living in forced exile since 1974, Nemec had limited opportunity to make films the way he wanted—the few significant works then were productions made for television. German TV station ZDF gave him the chance to finally turn to Franz Kafka, whom he called his “essential author” and to whom he already paid tribute in *Diamonds* by placing all the Prague dreamscapes at Kafka’s favorite walks. Taking a typically personal approach, Nemec depicts Samsa’s world through a subjective camera, emphasizing his inner world and his observation of shocked family and his surroundings. *In German with English subtitles.*

**Digibeta.** Screens with *Oratorio for Prague* (1968) 29min Using funds from abroad, Nemec documented the exciting times of the so-called Prague Spring and the road to “socialism with a human face.” With film stock and camera at his disposal, he was ready to document the invasion by Soviet tanks, which crushed the democratization process. The film juxtaposes the hopes of the freewheeling youth during the Spring with the disbelief and despair that followed in the summer a few months later. *In English. Digibeta.*

Tues, Nov 12 at 7pm

**Pears of the Deep (Perlicky na dne)** (1966) 107min

*Directed by Jan Nemec, Vera Chytilova, Jaromil Jires, Jiri Menzel, and Evald Schorm.*

*With Milos Ctrnacty, Frantisek Havel.*

A manifesto of the Czechoslovak New Wave, this anthology of five short films by five rising directors is based on a book by the celebrated writer Bohumil Hrabal. Absurdist in style, with a heightened attention to the individual, Hrabal’s work broke with the socialist realism that dominated the era. Nemec’s story *The Imposters* is the simplest stylistically, chronicling two elderly men who share stories of their illustrious life careers while spending time together in a hospital. Ultimately they reveal themselves to be masters of the art of embellishment.

Mon, Nov 11 at 7pm

**A Report on the Party and Guests (O slavnosti a hostech)** (1966) 70min

*With Ivan Vyskocil, Jan Klusak, Evald Schorm, Zdena Skvorecka.*

In collaboration with Ester Krumbachova, who also contributed to the script and visual style of Vera Chytilova’s *Daisies*, Nemec made this absurdist yet universal film that placed him in the ranks of the Czech avant-garde. An examination of the mechanics of power and the ways people collaborate in the reality that oppresses them, the film follows a group of middle-aged bourgeois friends as they picnic in the woods on their way to a celebration. Soon they are assaulted by thugs who begin to interrogate them for no reason, until the party’s host intervenes. A selection at the 1968 New York Film Festival, the film was nevertheless banned at home by the Communists, who rebuffed Nemec’s assurances that it was not intended as an allegory of the current government.

Sat, Nov 9 at 7pm

**Toyen** (2005) 63min NY Premiere!

*With Zuzana Stivinova, Jan Budar.*

In one of the most enigmatic films of his career, Nemec uses an abstract structure to create this portrait of revered surrealist painter Toyen, whose ambiguously gendered name was given to her by fellow surrealist Jindrich Styrsky. The film, true to the subject’s own style, is an idiosyncratic vision that revisits
the most oppressive period of her life. At that time she lived in Prague and during World War II provided shelter to the artist Jindrich Heisler, who was evading calls to transports. Much like the artists’ lives, the film disintegrates into hallucinatory visions, attempting to reveal the images that fueled Toyen’s imagination through a series of associations.

**Wed, Nov 13 at 7:45pm Introduction by Zuzana Stivinova**

**About BAMcinématek**
The four-screen BAM Rose Cinemas (BRC) opened in 1998 to offer Brooklyn audiences alternative and independent films that might not play in the borough otherwise, making BAM the only performing arts center in the country with two mainstage theaters and a multiplex cinema. In July 1999, beginning with a series celebrating the work of Spike Lee, BAMcinématek was born as Brooklyn’s only daily, year-round repertory film program. BAMcinématek presents new and rarely seen contemporary films, classics, work by local artists, and festivals of films from around the world, often with special appearances by directors, actors, and other guests. BAMcinématek has not only presented major retrospectives by major filmmakers such as Michelangelo Antonioni, Manoel de Oliveira, Shohei Imamura, Vincente Minnelli (winning a National Film Critics’ Circle Award prize for the retrospective), Kaneto Shindo, Luchino Visconti, and William Friedkin, but it has also introduced New York audiences to contemporary artists such as Pedro Costa and Apichatpong Weerasethakul. In addition, BAMcinématek programmed the first US retrospectives of directors Arnaud Desplechin, Nicolas Winding Refn, Hong Sang-soo, and, most recently, Andrzej Zulawski. From 2006 to 2008, BAMcinématek partnered with the Sundance Institute and in June 2009 launched BAMcinemaFest, a 16-day festival of new independent films and repertory favorites with 15 NY feature film premieres; the fifth annual BAMcinemaFest ran from June 19—28, 2013.

**Credits**

*The Wall Street Journal* is the title sponsor of BAM Rose Cinemas and BAMcinématek.

Steinberg Screen at the BAM Harvey Theater is made possible by The Joseph S. and Diane H. Steinberg Charitable Trust.

Pepsi is the official beverage of BAM.

Brooklyn Brewery is the preferred beer of BAMcinématek.

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**General Information**

**Tickets:** General Admission: $13  
BAM Cinema Club Members: $8, BAM Cinema Club Movie Moguls: Free  
Seniors & Students (25 and under with a valid ID, Mon—Thu): $9  
Bargain matinees (Mon—Thu before 5pm & Fri—Sun before 3pm, no holidays): $9

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, BAM Rose Cinemas, and BAMcafé are located in the Peter Jay Sharp building at 30 Lafayette Avenue (between St Felix Street and Ashland Place) in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn. BAM Harvey Theater is located two blocks from the main building at 651 Fulton Street (between Ashland and Rockwell Places). Both locations house Greenlight Bookstore at BAM kiosks. BAM Fisher, located at 321 Ashland Place, is the newest addition to the BAM campus and houses the Judith and Alan Fishman Space and Rita K. Hillman Studio. BAM Rose Cinemas is Brooklyn’s only movie house dedicated to first-run independent and foreign film and repertory programming. BAMcafé, operated by Great Performances, offers small plate and prix-fixe dinner menus prior to BAM Howard Gilman Opera House evening performances. BAMcafé also features an eclectic mix of spoken word and live music for BAMcafé Live on Friday and Saturday nights with a drink and small plate menu available starting at 6pm.
Subway: 2, 3, 4, 5, Q, B to Atlantic Avenue – Barclays Center (2, 3, 4, 5 to Nevins St for Harvey Theater)  
            D, N, R to Pacific Street; G to Fulton Street; C to Lafayette Avenue
Train: Long Island Railroad to Atlantic Terminal – Barclays Center
Bus: B25, B26, B41, B45, B52, B63, B67 all stop within three blocks of BAM  
Car: Commercial parking lots are located adjacent to BAM

For ticket and BAMbus information, call BAM Ticket Services at 718.636.4100, or visit BAM.org.