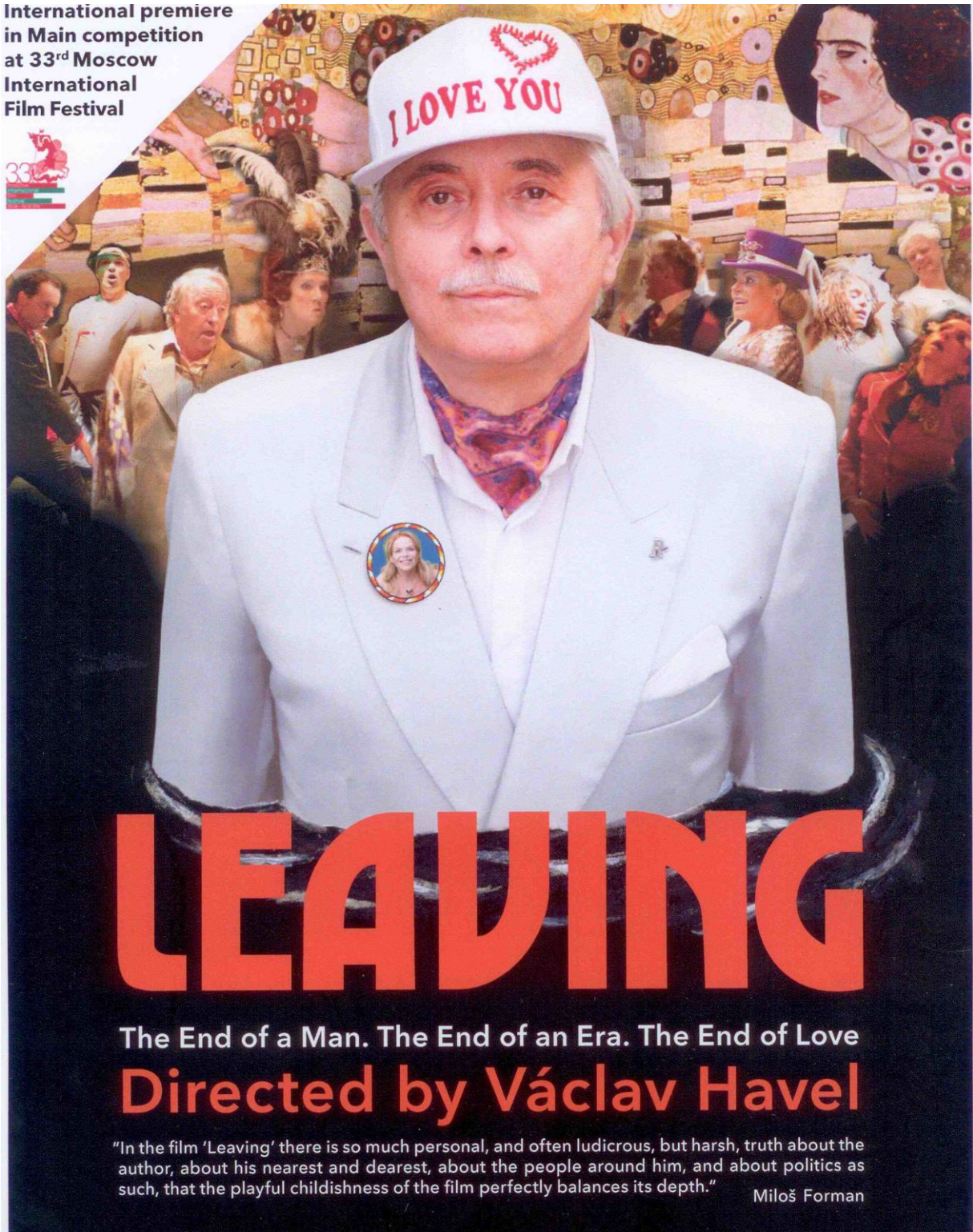


International premiere
in Main competition
at 33rd Moscow
International
Film Festival



LEAVING is a bitter sweet comedy that follows a highly appointed Chancellor who set to step down from his position after years of service to his country. With just two last days left to enjoy his palatial villa before he is finally evicted, his situation gradually goes from bad to worse.

Producer
BUC-FILM s.r.o.

Co-producers
Zdeněk Bakala
Czech Television
BONTONFILM a.s.
Centrum rozvoje Česká Skalice o.s.

General Partner
Československá obchodní banka, a.s.

The film was created with the support of
The State Fund of the Czech Republic for the Support and Development of Czech
Cinematography

CZ Distributor
Bontonfilm a.s.

Story, screenplay and directed by Václav Havel

Producer: Jaroslav Bouček

Director of Photography: Jan Malíř

Music: Michal Pavlíček

Editor: Jiří Brožek

Costumes: Zuzana Ježková

Architect: Ondřej Nekvasil

Sound: Viktor Ekrt

Make-up Artist: Zdeněk Klika

Motion Cooperation: Jiří Kylián

1st Assistant Director: Jiří Kačírek



Starring

Josef Abrhám

Alma

Jiří Bartoška

Radek Bár

Karel Beseda

Jan Budař

Jaroslav Dušek

Ivan M. Havel

Václav Havel

Dagmar Havlová Veškrnová

Eva Holubová

Vlasta Chramostová

Oldřich Kaiser

Miroslav Krobot

Marián Labuda

Jiří Lábus

Pavel Landovský

Květa Ležovičová

Jiří Macháček

Stanislav Milota

Michal Novotný

Martin Palouš

Josef Polášek

Barbora Seidlová

Ivana Uhlířová

Tatiana Vilhelmová

Stanislav Zindulka

Former president and playwright **Václav Havel** has his directorial debut in the film version of his world-renowned play *Leaving*.

The intimate drama about the loss of power, filmed according to Václav Havel's screenplay, was produced by BUC Film, owned by Jaroslav Bouček, who has produced many successful Czech films, e.g. *Je třeba zabít Sekala* (*It is Necessary to Kill Sekal*) (10 Czech Lion awards), *Babí léto* (*Indian Summer*) (4 Czech Lion awards) and *Václav* (2 Czech Lion awards)

Václav Havel directing a film is, in his own words – at the close of his public career - rather symbolic. His family, primarily his uncle Miloš Havel, is closely linked to the development of Czechoslovakian film and building up the film industry during the First Republic. Václav Havel, as a child, wanted to become a film director. However, the circumstances of the period thwarted both his studies and his long-time desire.

Simultaneously, this is the first time that Václav Havel interprets his own work. *“A play is a kind of semi-finished work that its playwright offers to theatres and then they do what they want with it,”* says Václav Havel and adds an explanation as to why he decided to try directing a film. *“I think that a playwright should humbly bear this. If he cannot stand an interpretation by someone else, he should write novels and not plays. After many decades of having someone else interpret my plays in this manner, I desired to finally interpret myself; and moreover in a film, which for me means a certain inner satisfaction. Originally, and actually for my entire life, I wanted to be primarily a filmmaker.”*

The End of a Man. The End of an Era. The End of Love

Leaving is the story of a turning point in a person's life. Dr. Vilém Rieger was a chancellor for many years; however, he recently was ousted from his office and he evidently is unable to cope with this on the inside. Although he endeavours to not let it show, in essence his world has collapsed. He must move out of the government's villa, which has over the years become his home, and he must

undergo undignified procedures separating the government's things from his private things. Simultaneously - and primarily - he must live through the falling apart of his surroundings, his "court", and realise how little he knew it: his grovelling secretary turns out to be a snake, a nasty bureaucrat the only one faithful to him, Rieger's older daughter slowly backs away from her original intention to have her father live with her, the younger daughter, who appeared to be only a kind of family ornament, on the contrary is the only one who looks for a realistic way out. Rieger receives an offer from higher up, an offer that would allow him to stay in the villa if he publicly supports his cynical adversary. This offer is backed by blackmail: his enemies, as it turns out, have acquired some incriminating letters, which they are prepared to offer to a tabloid newspaper. The broken Rieger eventually capitulates totally: he accepts the humiliating position of advisor to his former secretary-traitor and he even rationally justifies this move.

The film is not just about the leaving of one politician from his office, but more generally about the phenomenon of change itself: every second something comes and something irretrievably goes. We do not know from where everything emerges and know even less to where it disappears. This is in fact a classic theme of dramas: the end. The end of a man. The end of an era. The end of a community. The end of love.



*“The idea of filming *Leaving* was not originally my idea; nonetheless, when I look back on it, it seems to me that what played a really important role was the fact that this is my last play, to which I am obviously closer than those that were written more than twenty years ago,”* says playwright Václav Havel about why *Leaving* was chosen for film adaptation.

What essential differences does Václav Havel, as the author, see between the theatre and film versions of *Leaving*?

“There are many differences between film and theatre. For example: in theatre you see the action as a whole, at most one actor is closer to you than another. Whereas in film, you have the option, even the necessity of alternating close-ups with wide scenes and jumping from one actor to another;” explains the director.

*“With me it is made even more difficult by the fact that my plays are based on language, something which film does not really like. Yet, when someone does not recite my script precisely as it is written, in its entire and sometimes even unbearable length, it paradoxically loses its meaning and starts becoming boundless tedium. It is strange but true. My plays have been performed for forty years, so I know what I am talking about. In the film version of *Leaving* dialogues and longer discourses are understandably shortened, although not by too much. The biggest difference is the omission of the playwright’s voice, which is present in the play but not in the film.”*

The five-act play *Leaving* came into being in 2007. It had its Czech premiere on 22 May 2008 in the Archa Theatre, directed by David Radok, and starring Jan Tříska, Zuzana Stivínová, Vlasta Chramostová, and others. Its first performance abroad was in the same year on 20 September in London. During the past few years it was successfully performed worldwide. The last foreign production of *Leaving* was in May 2010 in the Wilma Theatre in Philadelphia.

Have any theatre productions influenced the film version of *Leaving*? Was the director inspired by some elements in certain theatrical versions?

“I do not think so,” says Václav Havel. *“Those productions were quite varied. I was always tremendously interested in them, but I do not remember a specific*

inspiration. Perhaps I could mention that I was impressed and perhaps somewhat influenced by the oppressive atmosphere that David Radok created in the final act in the Arch Theatre production,” remembers the playwright and adds, *“However, various things have inspired me, as they say, negatively. For example, I realised how easily one can confuse one character with another when it comes to similar types of actors in similar costumes and when even the setting itself promotes this confusion. It is no wonder that in this case a viewer, who is perplexed, grumbles in protest. Although we have not experienced any grumbling with regard to Leaving, sometimes it happened that I wanted to grumble.”*

We let the story live

Filming took place in July and August 2010 in the Čerych Villa protected monument, in the town of Česká Skalice.

“This is one of the most demanding projects I have ever been involved with,” says one of the most experienced Czech producers Jaroslav Bouček. *“Mainly because it was possible to find money for the film’s budget in a record amount of time. Usually it takes me three years to acquire financing; in this case I had three months. The entire shoot took place without any major problems. We were worried about Václav Havel’s health, but he handled it fantastically. Even the weather was good to us,”* adds the producer.



Leaving stars a selection of the best actors in the Czech Republic. To what extent did Václav Havel give them freedom and room for improvisation and to what extent did they have to strictly follow the director's instructions?

"Sometimes somebody came up with an idea or solution, sometimes somebody else did, but I do not remember there being any disputes, controversies or fundamental differences of opinion," director Václav Havel characterises working with elite Czech actors and adds, *"I appreciated that actors who had to refuse a starring role more than once were willing, out of friendship, to accept a practical attempt in that there are no small roles and accept a role that was truly microscopic."*

JOSEF ABRHÁM appears in the starring role of chancellor Rieger. *"Everybody is sometimes witty, sometimes moving and sometimes ludicrous. Such is life and that is how I want to play my part. Without all these aspects it would be a mere caricature,"* said the actor about the character he portrays on the silver screen.

"My hero personifies, in his own way, a model of fate. He lived a meaningful and more or less rich life that is ending in its present form. Rieger, in this phase of life, does not know what will happen next. He has normal human characteristics and simultaneously a nature that we can say is not fairly common. He held a high office, and when a person, long accustomed to this, all of a sudden loses this, he experiences a great change and everyone reacts differently to this in life. Even he has trouble dealing with this but gradually reconciles himself with the fact that everything around him is no longer the way it was, and finally with the fact that he must leave the luxurious house and that he does not know where to go...To a certain extent each of us will experience a similar change. What is important is how we deal with it, how we are able to adapt," says Josef Abrahám about the character of chancellor Rieger.



It is no secret that the playwright wrote the leading female role – Rieger’s girlfriend Irena – for his wife, the actress **DAGMAR HAVLOVÁ**, in the theatre version. *“The part of Irena was written for me, but not about me,”* reminds us the portrayer of Irena in the film and adds, *“I was there at the inception of the play, when Václav was writing it, and I read the first manuscript, so I had the opportunity to see how she developed. I loved playing her. I endeavoured to reveal the innermost recesses of my soul in Irena. The theatre Irena, which I studied and was not able to play due to illness, helped me with the script, which I still remembered even after two years. But in the film I started out with a clean slate. Every director has a different idea of how to play a role, and every actor portrays a character in a different way every time.”*

All those that were involved in the shooting agreed that a very creative and simultaneously family atmosphere was created during the summer months on the set in Česká Skalice. The entire crew united in their will to create the best possible results.

“The director, Václav Havel, was shooting his first feature film and he kept repeating that he actually did not know how to go about it. This evoked the feeling in everybody that he needs help,” remembers **JIRÍ MACHÁČEK**, who plays a shameless tabloid journalist in the film. *“This led to such a collective effort, such volition to please the director, as I have never seen on another shoot. It was also obvious that this work made him happy, and this also motivated*

us. Moreover, we also knew that he was not going to shoot another film, that this was his 'once is enough', so we fell all over ourselves in order to satisfy him. And I am not talking about just the actors. I saw this in the entire crew. I have never worked with a director who could impose his will so profoundly, and yet so imperceptibly, as director Havel."

"It was an amazing gathering," agreed actress **EVA HOLUBOVÁ**. *"The filmmaking elite met there, but in spite of the tremendous experience everyone had, everyone exuded such beginner's enthusiasm, possibly because of Václav and the charisma he radiates. That means they did more than they had to, more than was expected of them. Sometimes I was so emotionally overwhelmed I wanted to cry. Havel is great in that he does not get emotional. He speaks clearly, succinctly and concisely. He is a very astute director with a sense of humour, but with something more. He looks at the world with a perspective from above,"* confides the actress who plays Monika, Irena's best friend.

"Václav's directing meant that he gave us complete freedom, but when he did not like something, he very assertively but calmly made us aware of that and in the end he always got his way," Dagmar Havlová characterises the director's approach.

"No stress, no tension," says Josef Abrhám about the atmosphere of the shoot. *"Václav Havel has the extraordinary gift of being able to recognise what is good, that it is pointless to try something else, to make another take. He only said, 'That is good, I like that.' It is usually like that. Only one take is made. I think joining the playwright Havel with the director Havel was, in this case, auspicious. We let the story live and thanks to that we were relaxed."*

It Comes Full Circle

Every director has a favourite phase of work – preparation, rehearsal with the actors, the actual filming, or work in the editing room. Which phase did Václav Havel enjoy the most and which gave him the most satisfaction?

“I probably enjoyed most that which is ultimately the most important, the actual filming,” confesses Václav Havel. *“I was nervous at how long it took to prepare every shot. I was surrounded by outstanding professionals, who did not waste even a minute. Nonetheless, if you are not accustomed to it, it is a little discomfoting to constantly wait for the moment when everything is ready for the actual filming. A person can become so absorbed in a film – at least that is the way it was for me - that it is not possible to pass the time waiting by reading or watching television or discussing other matters. For me, as a person who was meticulously responsible, also not pleasant was the fact that this costs a lot of money, and because of that and other things, such as the contractual obligations of the actors, it was necessary to precisely adhere to the filming schedule. Although we finished earlier than planned, the uncertainty as to whether we will finish on time made me nervous.”*

The people of the crew of the film *Leaving* were truly the best in their profession. Jan Maliř was the cameraman, Jiří Brožek, seven-time winner of the Czech Lion award, was the editor, the architect of the film was the stage designer and architect Ondřej Nekvasil, the winner of many international awards, led by the EMMY 2001 (outstanding art direction) for the American miniseries *Anne Frank: The Whole Story*.



The director invited one of the world's leading choreographers, Jiří Kylián, for motion cooperation.

“To have the opportunity to work with the most talented actors in the Czech Republic was amazing! It was a great holiday for me,” says **JIŘÍ KYLIÁN** and adds, *“Meeting Václav Havel and the opportunity to be close to him, to talk with him about life and art, was one of the greatest experiences of my life. His directorial instructions were always very precise and I just tried to implement them as best as possible.”*

Václav Havel also lavished praise on Kylián. *“Working with him was great. He knew precisely what he wanted. He knew how to explain it clearly and quickly. His masterfulness was combined with kindness. It is a pity that we could not enjoy working together longer.”*

The world-renowned choreographer had to deal with a situation in which the purely dramatic ensemble had to perform in a big dance scene.

“Perhaps it is a little strange, but when I was 19 years old I worked with the actors from the ‘Činoherní Klub’ (Drama Club) on the play Na koho to slovo padne directed by Jan Kačer. That was a great experience for me,” remembers Jiří Kylián. *“So working with Václav Havel on the film Leaving means I have come full circle!”*

Before filming, Václav Havel said that if the film is not good, he would be the first to recognise that fact and then he would lock it in a safe, return the sponsors' money and not allow it to be released. Because we are well on our way to the premiere, this 'crisis scenario' certainly will not happen. Many directors admit that they try to improve a film up to the last minute and that they would like to change it just before the premiere.

Do you also have this feeling of uncertainty or are you completely satisfied with the final version of the film *Leaving*?

“That comment about the safe was of course an exaggeration or sort of a joke. I will not stop the film from being released, I do not think I even have the right to do that, but understandably I will be curious as to how it is received. If it is

favourably received, I will rejoice in that my public career is not at an end and did not culminate by blowing up. If it is not successful and the critics tear it to pieces, I will say to myself that people have encountered worse things than not being able to make a good film," says Václav Havel.

About the Playwright

VÁCLAV HAVEL

Writer and playwright, one of the first spokesmen for Charta 77 (Charter 77), leader of political changes in November 1989, the last president of Czechoslovakia and the first president of the Czech Republic.

Václav Havel is without a doubt the most versatile and most significant person on the Czech cultural and political scenes in the last half century.

In addition to plays and scripts that he co-authored, one short radio play (*Anděl strážný* {*Guardian Angel*}) and one television play (*Motýl na anténě* {*Butterfly on the Antenna*}), playwright Václav HAVEL is the author of the following plays: *Zahradní slavnost* {*The Garden Party*} (1963), *Vyrozumění* {*The Memorandum*} (1965), *Ztížená možnost soustředění* {*The Increased Difficulty of Concentration*} (1968), *Spiklenci* {*Conspirators*} (1971), *Žebrácká opera* {*The Beggar's Opera*} (1972), *Audience* {*Audience*} (1975), *Vernisáž* {*Unveiling*} (1975), *Horský hotel* {*Mountain Hotel*} (1976), *Protest* {*Protest*} (1978), *Chyba* {*Mistake*} (1983), *Largo desolato* {*Largo desolato*} (1984), *Pokoušení* {*Temptation*} (1985), *Asanace* {*Redevelopment*} (1987), and *Zítřka to spustíme* {*Tomorrow*} (1988).

He wrote the first version of the play *Leaving* in the summer of 1989, before the changes that occurred in November, which placed him in the highest office of

the Czech state for a long time. Between 1989 – 2003 he was the Czechoslovakian and later the Czech president.

After retiring from politics, he has devoted his time to the observance of human rights in the world and to a literary agenda. As the co-founder of the Dagmar and Vaclav Havel VIZE 97 Foundation, he supports a range of humanitarian, health and education projects.

His eight-volume *Spisy (Writings)* was published by Torst Publishers. The newly created Václav Havel Library endeavours to collect and organise everything that he wrote and what can, one way or another, paint a vivid picture of various moments in history and give you a sense of the atmosphere of various times. Václav Havel has received many national awards, international awards and honorary doctorates for his literary works, for his opinions, and for his lifelong efforts on the observance of human rights.

He returned to the subject matter that he worked on in *Leaving* only in 2006. The final version of the play came into being in 2007. *Leaving* is his first play in forty years at which he could be present for its preparation and (so-called world) premiere. The film *Leaving* is his directorial debut.

The Producer

JAROSLAV BOUČEK

Member of the European Film Academy, member of the Czech Television and Film Academy presidium, founder of the film and television companies BUC - FILM s.r.o., BULL FILM spol. s r.o. and SIMPLY CINEMA spol. s r.o.

- **Television serial *Poste Restante*, 2009**
- **Feature film *Václav*, 2007**

Czech Lion awards for best actor in a leading role and best actor in a supporting role

The Shanghai International Film Festival 2008 award for best actress and best screenplay.

- **Television serials *Náměštíčko* 2002/2004, *Náves* 2004/2005 and *Příkopy* 2006**
- **Feature film *Babí léto (Indian Summer)*, 2001**

The best-selling film abroad via Telexport including distribution to American cinemas

Czech Lion awards for screenplay, best actor and best actress in a leading role and best actor in a supporting role

The grand prize of the jury, Finále Plzeň, the Golden Kingfisher

2002 Variety Critics' Choice, Karlovy Vary IFF

2002 Palm Springs IFF – Audience Award, Cleveland IFF – Roxanne T. Mueller

Award, Saint Louis IFF and Sedona IFF – Audience Award for the best film

US. Comedy Arts Festival, Aspen, Colorado – Best Foreign Film

- **Television serial *Šípková Růženka (Sleeping Beauty)*, 2001**

- **Feature film *Anděl exit (Angel Exit)*, 2000**

2 Czech Lion awards for editing and artistic achievement,

Joenu Daring Digital Award, Korea, 2002

- **Television serial *Život na zámku (Life at the Palace)*, 1995/1996, 1999**

- **Feature film *Je třeba zabít Sekala (It is Necessary to Kill Sakal)*, 1998**

10 Czech Lion awards for the film, screenplay, director, director of photography, music, artistic achievement, editing, sound, best actor in a leading, and best actress in a supporting role

34th Karlovy Vary IFF, best actor, Special Award of the Ecumenical jury

Czech nomination by the Czech Film and Television Academy for the American Film Academy award (Oscar)

Christian, Annual Critics' Award, 1998, and awards at many festivals abroad.

Co-producers

Freedom, education and responsibility. These are the pillars on which our attitude in life, family and work are based. That is why, in addition to cultural projects, we also support promising Czech students who study at prestigious universities abroad and responsible politicians and political parties.

Our world still needs people like Václav Havel. People that doubt, who think about deeper meanings and about relationships, who formulate urgent questions, who occasionally provoke, and arouse one's conscience. People who are creative and are not indifferent to our world.

We have respected the attitude in life and credentials of Václav Havel for a long time. The play *Leaving* enchanted us when it was performed on the theatre stage. We are pleased that as co-producers we can be there when this film disperses throughout the world.

MICHAELA AND ZDENĚK BAKALA

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