



KINOTEKA CLOSING NIGHT GALA

# The Peasants + live musical accompaniment

## The Peasants

**Directors:** DK Welchman, Hugh Welchman  
**©:** Narodowe Centrum Kultury, Mazowiecki Instytut Kultury, SKP Ślusarek Jubiak Pieczyk Sp. k.  
**Production Companies:** Breakthru Films, Chłopi Sp. Z o.o., Digitalkraft, Art Shot  
**Executive Producers:** Laurie Ubben, Steve Muench, Sita Saviolo, DK Welchman, Kyle Stroud, Tom Ogden, Adam Gudell, Robert Kijak  
**Produced by:** Sean Bobbitt, Hugh Welchman  
**Line Producer:** Tomasz Wochniak  
**1st Assistant Director:** Wiktor Mentlewicz  
**Script Supervisor:** Dagmara Foltyn  
**CASTING:** Ewa Brodzka  
**Written by:** DK Welchman, Hugh Welchman  
**Based on the novel by:** Władysław Reymont  
**Script Consultant:** Paweł Mossakowski  
**Cinematographers:** Radek Ładczuk, Kamil Polak, Szymon Kuriata  
**Stills Photography:** Miki Wecel, Małgorzata Kuznik, Martyna Golik  
**Visual Effects Supervisors:** Łukasz Mackiewicz, Kamil Polak  
**Painting Animation Director:** Piotr Dominiak  
**Head Editor:** DK Welchman  
**Editors:** Patrycja Piróg, Miki Wecel  
**Production Designer:** Elwira Pluta  
**2nd Production Designer:** Piotr Dominiak  
**Costume Designer:** Katarzyna Lewińska  
**Hair & Make-up:** Mirosława Wojtczak, Waldemar Pokromski  
**End Credits:** Kacper Romaniuk  
**Colour Grading & Pregrading:** DK Welchman, Piotr Dominiak  
**Music:** Łukasz 'L.U.C.' Rostkowski  
**Music Performed by:** Rebel Babel Film Orchestra  
**Conducted by:** Łukasz 'L.U.C.' Rostkowski  
**Music Preparation:** Łukasz 'L.U.C.' Rostkowski  
**Choreography:** Daniela Komedera  
**Sound Designer:** Michał Jankowski  
**Sound Recordists:** Maciej Amilkiewicz, Bartek Sumiła, Michał Jankowski, Mariusz Bielecki, Maciej Krupa  
**Re-recording Mixer:** Filip Krzemien  
**Supervising Sound Editor:** Michał Jankowski  
**Stunt Co-ordinators:** Zbigniew Modej, Jarosław Nowikowski  
**Cast:**  
Kamila Urzędowska (*Jagna Paczesiówna*)  
Robert Gulaczyk (*Antek Boryna*)  
Mirosław Baka (*Maciej Boryna*)  
Sonia Miertelica (*Hanka Borynowa*)  
Małgorzata Kozuchowska (*organist's wife*)  
Dorota Stalińska (*Jagustyńka*)  
Ewa Kasprzyk (*Marcjanna Paczes, 'Dominikowa'*)  
Cezary Łukaszewicz (*Michał, blacksmith*)  
Sonia Bohosiewicz (*mayor's wife*)  
Andrzej Konopka (*Mayor Piotr*)  
Mateusz Rusin (*Mateusz*)  
Maciej Musiał (*Jasio*)  
Poland-Lithuania-Serbia-France 2023©  
115 mins

From the creators of *Loving Vincent*, adapted from the Polish Nobel-Prize winning novel of the same name by Władysław Reymont. *The Peasants* tells the story of Jagna, a young woman determined to forge her own path within the confines of a late 19th century Polish village – a hotbed of gossip and ongoing feuds, held together, rich and poor, by pride in their land, adherence to colourful traditions and a deep-rooted patriarchy. When Jagna finds herself caught between the conflicting desires of the village's richest farmer, his eldest son and other leading men of the community, her resistance puts her on a tragic collision course with the community around her. With a visual style consciously inspired by paintings from Reymont's Polish contemporaries, the film tells a story spanning the four seasons, in which a young woman's attempts to assert her independence keep coming up against the patriarchal traditions that have held sway in her village for centuries.

This extraordinary painted adaptation of *The Peasants* novel was Poland's official Oscar candidate. Using tens of thousands of hand-painted images supported by music created by nearly 100 musicians from Poland, Ukraine, and Belarus under the baton of Łukasz L.U.C. Rostkowski. The soundtrack was created as part of the international Rebel Babel Film Orchestra, which has united over 11,000 musicians from 20 countries in numerous performances and concerts.

This special event will be accompanied by music from Polish orchestral musicians, enriching the already sumptuous film sound by performing live during the screening to the original soundtrack, expanding the sound spectrum and deepening the experience of authentic, acoustic surround.

The film won the Special Jury Prize and Audience Award at the 2023 Polish Film Festival and this screening is part of the Kinoteka Polish Film Festival 2024 and is the Festival's Closing Gala.

## Director's Statement – DK Welchman

I had my first contact with *The Peasants* in high school, at the age of 17, because it is required in all schools in Poland. I came back to this many years later when I was listening to an audiobook while painting a shot for my previous film, *Loving Vincent*. Listening to it as an adult was a completely different experience. What struck me as an animator and director were the elements that didn't impress me as a teenager: his tour de force description of a year in community life; the poetic artistry of descriptions of nature; and the proud and challenging struggles of the characters in the novel, interspersed with meticulously observed moments of tenderness and poignant personal tragedies.

I saw how I could respect what Reymont had created with such piety and love; how to show these intricate descriptions of nature, this delight in life, nature, earth, and human nature: by turning them back into a feature film made in our painting animation technique.

I was delighted with the idea of adapting this book in this technique, which would allow both the story to be told and the nuances of detailed poetic

## IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

**Kinoteka Closing Night Gala:**

**The Peasants + live musical accompaniment**

Thu 28 Mar 17:45 BFI IMAX

**TV Preview: Michael Palin in Nigeria**

**+ Q&A with Michael Palin**

Mon 15 Apr 18:15

**Woman With a Movie Camera preview:**

**Nezouh + Q&A with director Soudade Kaadan**

Thu 25 Apr 18:10

**African Odysseys presents Preview: Omen**

**Augure + intro and Q&A with director Baloji**

Fri 26 Apr 18:00

**Mark Kermode in 3D at BFI IMAX**

Mon 29 Apr 18:30; Mon 27 May 18:30

**Preview: Hoard + Q&A**

Fri 3 May 18:00

**Billy Connolly: Big Banana Feet + Q&A with**

**Douglas Weir and director Murray Grigor**

Mon 20 May 18:10

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descriptions of nature that are so significant in the novel and are so much a part of the work. Shooting a feature-length film with actors and then repainting frame-by-frame in post-production would allow both of these aspects – tense personal dramas and painterly visions – to be combined in a coherent way.

After years of working on a film about Vincent van Gogh, I also felt a strong need to tell a story about women: to show their struggles and passion, and strength. Jagna and Hanka are both distinct and important characters in Polish literature, each representing different values, but both connected by their struggles in a society very much defined by men. Their gender reflects negatively on their position in a male-driven society and causes them to struggle in life in the village of Lipce. There is incredible realism in the portrayal of Reymont's character. He shows deep understanding, admiration and sympathy for these people, never rejecting the truth about his faults and weaknesses. Jagna is an expression of faith in the freedom of the individual, but at the same time, it symbolises the tragedy and rejection that such a person can encounter in a small community.

Reymont's *The Peasants* stands out from other realistic novels because it not only tells about the hardships of peasant life but also shows something more. Throughout the four seasons in which the story unfolds, many tragedies happen to both individual characters and the entire village. Peasants protect their rights with great passion. Even though they fight unevenly and are often on the losing side, they always try to defend their freedom and the right to be the masters of their destiny.

However, Reymont is far from idealising Polish peasants. It shows that they can be greedy, proud, petty, jealous, and intolerant. From the point of view of history, these features have often determined the fate of our nation.

I think this is a great novel that deserves an extraordinary and innovative adaptation. It deserves to be rediscovered not only nationally but also internationally – and is rightly recognised for what it is – one of the great works of European prose. I understand how challenging it is, especially at the script level where we take 1,000 pages of prose and distil it into a 100-minute movie. There were important cuts made in the script while staying true to the source material. I tried to introduce modern methods of storytelling into my structure and associate them not only with the rhythm of the seasons, as in the novel, but also with the characters who influence the lives of others. I wanted to show the synergy of the characters with their influence on each other; sensuality, sexuality, and brutality of their world, and the contrast with the superior majesty and beauty of nature.

Production notes