



# LARKS ON A STRING

DIGITALLY RESTORED AND BACK ON CINEMAS

Jiří Menzel's fourth film was approved for production during the Prague Spring. It was inspired by motifs from Bohumil Hrabal's short story collection *Inzerát na dům, ve kterém už nechci bydlet* (An Advertisement for the House I Don't Want to Live in Anymore). The promising young filmmaker and the successful writer thus continued their collaboration on Oscar-winning tragicomedy *Ostře sledované vlaky* (Closely Watched Trains, 1966). *Skřivánci na niti* takes place in the steelworks, where the communist totalitarian regime sent politically questionable people for re-education during the Stalinist period. A former prosecutor meets the barber Kudla, the young Adventist Pavel and his beloved Jitka. Meanwhile, the supervisor Anděl maintains close watch over everyone. This satirical take on the political repression of the 1950s was prohibited from distribution and locked away in the proverbial "vault" immediately after its completion, where it stayed for twenty years. Thus, the film's premiere did not take place until after November 1989. Menzel went on to win the Golden Bear for the film at the Berlinale in 1990.

### Jiří Menzel (1938–2020)

The world-renowned Czech director Jiří Menzel was one of the leading figures of the Czechoslovak New Wave of the 1960s. Employing subtle lyricism and sensitivity, he made many popular tragicomedies about everyday joys. Menzel was born on February 23, 1938 in Prague. After graduating from the Prague Film Academy – FAMU, where he studied alongside Věra Chytilová and Evald Schorm among others, he made his first feature film *Ostře sledované vlaky* (Closely Watched Trains, 1966). This tragicomedy set during the Nazi occupation of Bohemia in World War II won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. Menzel's next film, an adaptation of Vladislav Vančura's novel *Rozmarné léto* (Capricious Summer, 1967), opened the New York Film Festival. His *Skřivánci na niti* from 1969 received the Golden Bear at the Berlinale. However, because the film had been immediately banned, this did not happen until 21 years after its completion. His bittersweet comedy *Vesničko má středisková* (My Sweet Little Village, 1985) was nominated for an Oscar. Menzel drew on Hrabal's work a total of five times. Menzel died in 2020.

### About digital restoration

Larks on a String was filmed in 1969. Although the filmmakers were forced to cut out several scenes, public screenings were banned nevertheless, and the film did not premiere until 1990. Previously cut scenes were returned for the film's premiere, and this version was used as the reference for the digital restoration. The sources for the digitization were the original image negative and the original sound negative. Film materials are preserved by the Národní filmový archiv, Prague.

The Digital restoration of this film funded from the donation of Mrs. Milada Kučerová and Mr. Eduard Kučera was carried out by Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in collaboration with the Národní filmový archiv, Prague and Czech Film Fund in UPP and Soundsquare in 2021. This film was restored using the outputs of the NAKI DF13P010V006 "Methodology of Digitising the National Film Fund in the Czech Republic" project.

Czechoslovakia 1969 • 95 min. • DCP • Blu-ray

Director	Jiří Menzel
Screenplay	Bohumil Hrabal, Jiří Menzel
Photography	Jaromír Šofr
Editing	Jiřina Lukešová
Production design	Oldřich Bosák
Music	Jiří Šust
Cast	Vlastimil Brodský, Rudolf Hrušínský, Ferdinand Krůta, Václav Neckář, Jaroslav Satoranský, Leoš Suchařípa, Jitka Zelenohorská

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