



Finding God in Film: Young Filmmakers Showcase their Work at WYD's 5th Iñigo Film Festival (TIFF)

The 5th Iñigo Film Festival was launched in Krakow on Tuesday, July 26, at the height of the World Youth Day celebrations. Sponsored by the Jesuit Conference of European Provincials, the festival included select short films from all over the world. Like the previous festivals, this year's focused on young filmmakers grappling with the spiritual dimensions of life. It honored films which reflect the experiences of young people today by indicating the presence and/or absence of God in our modern secularized world or by taking into account the twin dimensions of faith and justice.

The three best short films received "Iñigo Awards": a first prize of 2.500 EUR; a second prize of 1.500 EUR; and a third prize of 1.000 EUR.

The winner was 友友 (YOYO, TAIWAN), by Shu-Wei Chang. "Life isn't meant to be easy" – Chen Zeng-You experiences the truth of this phrase – known by most people only as a sort of comforting line – in a quite existential manner. Due to his Congenital Neuro-vascular Anomalies, the left side of his body is completely paralyzed. Yoyo tells his story in moving pictures and is not shy about showing moments of desperation in which the boy feels excluded, disadvantaged by fate, completely worthless and even tired of life. That is, until a teacher provides him with the right impulse and makes him realize his dream of making music so he starts to learn playing the piano and trusts the divine spark within him. No, life isn't easy but it is this very challenge that will give his life meaning.

Second prize went to *Donde caen las hojas (Where Leaves Fall, SPAIN)* by Alicia Albares Martínez. It happens all too often that doctors see it as their job to keep their patients alive by hook or by crook, even if said patient is moribund. The film opposes this mentality with a presentiment of an altogether different reality by telling the story of Eva and her mother. When suddenly the mysterious picture of her daughter starts talking to Eva and thereby opens a window to this other world, this gives her the courage to act and enables her to provide her mother with a dignified departure after a heartfelt conciliatory conversation, far away from sedatives and medical contractions. The film dares to hint at the abundance of light that can manifest at the end of a person's life with a subtle imagery and in this way tells us of a faithful hope reaching beyond the death of the body.

Third prize went to *DJADO IVAN (GERMANY)* by Silke Meya. Seventy year old Djado Ivan

sets an example how few material goods a person needs to be happy. He has left behind the activities of former years, just as he has given up his apartment in the complex of prefabricated houses which he passes by without paying attention. His current wealth is the very own rhythm of life he has found on his little farm where he shares his everyday life with his many animals. The old man represents a vision of paradise which even young film makers can wholeheartedly embrace.

In addition to these prizes, there were also three additional Awards: the “Fidel Goetz Emerging Film Maker Award,” which includes a travel stipend for the festival; a non-monetary “Audience Award” to a film chosen by the audience; and (for the second time) an “Award for Best Humor and Spirituality.”

The “Fidel Goetz Emerging Film Maker Award” went to *Musimy Porozmawiac* (We Need to Talk) by Jędrzej Michałak. The title says it all: For the people who have their say in this movie it is necessary to speak, to verbalize the grief in their hearts. They all have lost a loved one and now talk to him in front of the camera, tell them what they couldn't tell when they were still alive because death had suddenly silenced them so they could no longer ask for forgiveness or say a conciliatory thank you. By addressing the beloved person who passed away they call him back to live, as it were, and in this way heal the pain of their loss. It is not surprising that this healing practice hints at the concept of resurrection itself. After all, we all have been resurrected, the living and the dead, through the faith in Jesus Christ.

The Audience Award went to *Sheng ming yong tan diao* (Aria of Life), a film from China by Mingzhu Ma. Zhiming goes back to his hometown, when he heard about grandpa's passing-away. When the relatives tell Zhiming about his grandpa's last days, the emotions between grandpa and grandson are peeled off layer after layer.

The program included 17 international films, selected from more than one thousand two hundred submissions. Categories included narrative fiction as well as animated and documentary films: each film explored the general theme “City of God.” The single theme cannot be said to have constrained the young filmmakers, as the submissions clearly proved: they were exciting and thought-provoking, as well as unsettled or funny. Through them one gets an amazing impression of the varicolored, manifold and inspiring work of young filmmakers from all over the world.

The Jesuits support the Iñigo Film Festival, to encourage young filmmakers who reflect on spirituality and faith in their own way and who visualize the cultural and social variety of God's

presence in the world. The Jesuit motto “finding and searching for God in all things” means finding God not only within religious rituals, in nature or in the encounter with others, but also in films. As pope John Paul II said: “The cinema enjoys a wealth of languages, a multiplicity of styles and a variety of narrative forms that are truly great. It thus offers an incomparable storehouse of expressive means for portraying the various areas in which the human being finds himself and for interpreting his inescapable calling to the beautiful, the universal and the absolute.”

The success of TIFF would not be possible without the great financial support of the Jesuit Conference of European Provincials; the Jesuit Provinces of Germany, Switzerland, Ireland, Britain, Netherland and Flanders, Southern Belgium and Luxembourg, North and South Poland; their Missions in Nuremberg, Zurich, and Vienna; the Fidel Goetz Foundation; Loyola Productions Munich, Tellux and other private and commercial contributors and foundations interested in religious film and other media for youth. The reactions of both the large audiences and the film makers themselves encourage festival director Fr. Christof Wolf, S.J. (Loyola Productions Munich, Germany) to continue with the “Jesuit Oscars” (as some in the press call them), which will be held next time in Panama in 2019, again in conjunction with the WYD (www.tiffestival.org).



From left: Audience Award Winner Mingzhu Ma; 1st Prize Winner Shu-Wei Chang; Chen Zeng-You (Actor “YOYO”, 1st Prize); Fidel Goetz Emerging Film Maker Award Winner Jdrzej Michalak; Artur Prus, S.J. (Assistant Director); Award for Best Humor and Spirituality: Estelle Darnault; Christof Wolf, S.J. (Festival Director) – Photographer: Tony Homsy, S.J.