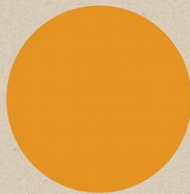




FESTIVAL DE CANNES  
2026 OFFICIAL SELECTION  
SHORT FILMS COMPETITION



# SPIRITUS SANCTUS

STARRING SEBASTIAN STANKIEWICZ, IZA DĄBROWSKA, KLARA BIELAWKA, ARTUR PĄCZESNY, OSKAR STOCZYŃSKI, ERNEST LOREK, MARCIN SZTABIŃSKI  
WRITTEN BY ADAM PORĘBOWICZ DIRECTED BY MICHAŁ TOCZEK DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY TOMASZ PAWLIK EDITED BY IGNACY CIUNELIS, JAKUB DIDKOWSKI SOUND MARYLA KŁOSOWSKA SET DESIGNER KATARZYNA TOMCZYK  
COSTUME OLGA PRZYLIPIAK MAKE-UP ARTIST KATARZYNA WOJTASIK PRODUCTION MANAGER MICHALINA ZATYŁNA EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS KATARZYNA STASZCZYK, SŁAWOMIR ŁONISK  
PRODUCTION MUNK STUDIO - POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION CO-PRODUCTION HIGH SKILLS, POLISH PUBLIC TELEVISION, GDYNIA FILM CENTER  
A FILM CO-FINANCED BY POLISH FILM INSTITUTE

**MUNK  
STUDIO**

 Polish  
Filmmakers  
Association

 THIRTY  
MINUTES

 high skills

 TVP

 Gdynskie  
Centrum  
Filmowe

 POLISH  
FILM  
INSTITUTE

 NEW  
EUROPE  
FILM  
GALLERY

**ORIGINAL TITLE:** SPIRITUS SANCTUS

**DIRECTOR:** MICHAŁ TOCZEK

**SCRIPT:** ADAM PORĘBOWICZ

**CINEMATOGRAPHY:** TOMASZ PAWLIK

**EDITING:** IGNACY CIUNELIS, JAKUB DIDKOWSKI

**PRODUCTION DESIGN:** KATARZYNA TOMCZYK

**COSTUME DESIGN:** OLGA PRZYLIPIAK

**MAKEUP:** KATARZYNA WOJTASIK

**SOUND:** MARYLA KŁOSOWSKA

**PRODUCTION MANAGER:** MICHALINA ZATYLNA

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS:** KATARZYNA STASZCZYK, SŁAWOMIR ŁONISK

**PRODUCERS:** JERZY KAPUŚCIŃSKI, MAGDALENA TOMANEK

**PRODUCED BY:** MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION

**CO-PRODUCED BY:** TELEWIZJA POLSKA S.A., GDYŃSKIE CENTRUM FILMOWE, HIGH SKILLS

**CO-FINANCED BY:** POLISH FILM INSTITUTE

**STARRING:** SEBASTIAN STANKIEWICZ, IZABELA DĄBROWSKA, ARTUR PACZESNY, OSKAR STOCZYŃSKI, KLARA BIELAWKA, MARCIN SZTABIŃSKI, ALBERT OSIK

**GENRE:** COMEDY DRAMA

**DURATION:** 15'

**LANGUAGE:** POLISH

**PRODUCTION:** POLAND, 2026

**FESTIVALS:** Cannes Film Festival 2026 – Short Film Competition

**[PRESS MATERIALS](#)**



### **ABOUT THE FILM**

June 1999. Bogdan has to buy alcohol for his wife's 50th birthday but the timing couldn't be worse – the Pope's visit brings about a city-wide prohibition. A simple shopping jaunt quickly turns into a metaphysical odyssey filled with absurd events, curious meetings, and bizarre obstacles. With every step, it becomes less clear whether what he is searching for is still vodka or something much more profound.

*Spiritus Sanctus* premieres in the Short Film Competition at the 79th Cannes International Film Festival. The Munk Studio production is among 10 competing titles selected from among 3,184 films from 136 countries.

## CREATORS



### **MICHAŁ TOCZEK - director**

Born in Gdańsk in 1996. Director and screenwriter, graduate of the Film and TV Direction Department of Lodz Film School (2023). His work is characterized by a subtle sense of humor and expressive acting which together reveal the absurdities of reality hidden beneath the surface of everyday life. His short film *A Dead Marriage* (2022) was screened at over 45 festivals in 19 countries and won, among others, the Brest International Short Film Festival Grand Prix, the award for best student film at Palm Springs IFF, the Brussels Short Film Festival Grand Prix, the Silver Hobby-horse at the Krakow Film Festival, and more than a dozen other awards and special mentions in Poland and abroad.

His graduation film *Be Somebody* (2023), made the following year, received numerous awards, including the Golden Hobby-horse at KFF, the Jantar at the Koszalin debut film festival Młodzi i Film, the Golden Grape at the Lubuskie Film Summer, the PEER Award at the Leuven Kortfilmfest, and a Special Mention at the Polish Film Festival in Gdynia. Both films were screened at international festivals from the USA to Georgia, winning over 60 awards in total. His 2026 film *Spiritus Sanctus*, made at the Munk Studio, was

among ten titles selected for the Cannes Short Film Competition.

**ADAM PORĘBOWICZ - writer**

Independent filmmaker, graduate of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Warsaw and the Warsaw Film School. His debut film *Szerość* won the 2022 Jantar Award for Best Short Film at the Koszalin debut film festival Młodzi i Film. In 2025, he directed the short film *Macocho* at the Munk Studio which won an award at the 31st Prowincjonalia Film Festival in Września.

**TOMASZ PAWLIK – director of photography**

Graduate of the Direction of Photography department of Lodz Film School (2025). He has been the DOP on numerous short fiction and documentary films, including Michał Toczek's *A Dead Marriage* and *Be Somebody*. He gained experience working as a camera operator on feature films and television series, including Jan Holoubek's *Doppelgänger. The Double* and *High Water* Viesturs Kairiss's *January* and Łukasz Karwowski's *One Soul*. Together with Michał Edelman, he created the award-winning documentary *Freshman* produced at the Munk Studio as part of the First Documentary program.



### **SEBASTIAN STANKIEWICZ - Bogdan**

Film, theater, and television actor, known for his extraordinary charisma and versatility, capable of creating both comedic and dramatic roles. Graduate of the cultural animators school in Wrocław and the Puppetry department of the AST National Academy of Theatre Arts in Kraków (2006). He made his film debut in 2007 with a role in Bodo Kox's *Nie panikuj*. Since then, he has appeared in over 180 films, television series, and short films. His most notable roles include *Mister T.* by Marcin Krzyształowicz (2019), for which he received an award at the Gdynia Polish Film Festival and a nomination for the Eagles Polish Film Awards, *The Man with the Magic Box* by Bodo Kox (2017), *Kleks Academy* by Maciej Kawulski (2023), *Capo* by Robert Kwilman (2025), and the series *Edukacja XD* by Łukasz Kośmicki (2025). He previously worked with *Spiritus Sanctus*'s director Michał Toczek on the films *A Dead Marriage* (2022) and *Be Somebody* (2023).

## **INTERVIEW WITH MICHAŁ TOCZEK**

**You were just three years old in 1999. Where did the idea to tell a story about a prohibition during the Pope's visit come from?**

When I was at the Młodzi i Film festival in Koszalin a few years ago with my previous film, *Be Somebody*, screenwriter Adam Porębowicz told me a story about the prohibition during John Paul II's pilgrimage to Poland, which we found absurd and amusing. After returning from the festival, we met in Warsaw and figured we could write a screenplay on this topic. Since we are talking about prohibition, it seemed logical that the protagonist must be looking for alcohol. This starting point implied other things that began to emerge. We kept developing the story until we realized that this simple anecdote could use a metaphysical component. We did not want to create some kind of apology for John Paul II, but we also did not want our film to be cynical.



**In your previous film, you touched upon the cult of Lech Wałęsa. Now you are tackling the cult of John Paul II. What draws you to such iconic figures from Polish history?**

I am drawn to the unexpected. In Wałęsa's case, the inspiration came from his Facebook profile where the Solidarity legend shows a different side of him - human,

yet humorous. In *Spiritus Sanctus*, we have a sublime event related to the Holy Father's visit. We all know that the Pope was "a great Pole." But when the topic of prohibition comes up, it creates a clash between a small man and the great history. And that is what we wanted to explore.

**In one scene, the Pope's face appears in the frame printed on a large-format canvas hung upside down. It is somewhat reminiscent of the symbolic scene from Jerzy Skolimowski's film *Hands Up!* with Stalin's double eyes.**

Of course, I am very familiar with this scene. And I knew that if a giant sheet of paper with the Pope on it appeared in the frame, the viewer might spot the reference. We are telling a simple, funny story in which a guy tries to buy a bottle of wine during the preparations for the Pope's visit in the city. We knew that our somewhat nonchalant film had to be very formal, that these scenes need to have a certain visual quality to them. This reference stems more from the plot and the conventions we adopted.

**Your modest, yet very consistent filmography, reveals a certain characteristic of your style. Where does your incredibly warm sense of humor and the desire to make comedies, supposedly the most difficult film genre, come from?**

I never thought I wanted to make comedies. I am drawn to anecdotes and various curiosities of life that have humor in their DNA, like Wałęsa's old apartment or the pope and the prohibition. I think they can be a starting point for exploring broader themes. One of my favorite comedies is *Looking for Eric* by Ken Loach, a director not usually associated with the genre. It seems that its humor is also rooted in an anecdote he heard from the screenwriter. Then he simply told the story in a way that moves and entertains. In the case of *Spiritus Sanctus*, our script was five pages long, so we knew this film would be very short and needed an expressive form. We drew some inspiration from Roy Anderson, Aki Kaurismaki, and Czech cinema.

**This is the third time you casted Sebastian Stankiewicz in the leading role.**

Sebastian first played me in *A Dead Marriage*, then I invited him to my graduation project *Be Somebody*. But he did not get the part in *Spiritus Sanctus* just through connections. Sebastian has a knack for phenomenal portrayals of ordinary people who experience extraordinary stories. These characters often teeter on the edge, and we don't know whether to laugh at them or laugh with them. Sebastian makes us like his characters, balancing the irony with warmth.



**This time you gave him a slightly different acting task. He only says one sentence in the entire film.**

Spiritus Sanctus feels more nonchalant than my previous films which had a more standard narration. It veers towards a certain strangeness. When Sebastian and I were talking about this role, we asked ourselves a lot of questions about how to tell the story. We saw an opportunity to experiment a bit and do something we had not done before. We even considered him not speaking at all, but we did not want the form to be this ironclad.

**Some say that the main aim of going to film school is finding a crew to make films with. It feels like you have already found them.**

I think so. When you work together for a long time, you develop a common language, a shared understanding of cinema. We learn from each other and start to think alike. The first person to do that is the cinematographer, Tomek Pawlik, with whom I made three films. We are friends from school. But so is production designer Kasia Tomczyk, costume designer Olga Przylipiak, and others. Each of my films has been a challenge and it was great to tackle it in such a friendly environment. And at the same time, I get to watch my collaborators develop and rise to the top.

**What was the biggest challenge with *Spiritus Sanctus*?**

Definitely the matter of metaphysics. This is a topic with no clear-cut answers and no way to present it convincingly. Sometimes it felt like we had bitten more than we could chew.

**You shot *Spiritus Sanctus* on film.**

Yes, we shot it on 16mm. This is my first time shooting on film. But we had a fantastic cinematographer and camera assistants, so we did not see it as a challenge. All the footage we shot is technically flawless. Of course, it was a huge budget drain and we had only three days to shoot a historical film about the 1990s - five days less than it took to shoot *Be Somebody*. If anything went wrong, there would be no time and money for reshoots. But it was a production and artistic decision to make it all come together. It was so exciting that I want to shoot my next film on film as well.

**Your films to date have won a staggering number of awards. Now you have been shortlisted for the Palme d'Or at Cannes. What is the secret to Michał Toczek's success?**

I always do what I enjoy. But, above all, success depends on the work of many people - a film is a collective creation. Of course it needs a director to be the helm, but I also draw on the talents of other people I trust and I always ask for their input.

**In Poland, short films are a stage directors abandon after graduating and making their debuts. Meanwhile, many experienced filmmakers around the world occasionally return to this format - Jim Jarmusch and Wes Anderson, for example.**

There are also those who specialize in short films. At various festivals, I have competed with films whose creators are many years older and much more experienced than me. I know the Polish Film Institute is working on a program to support short film production. I hope this will make it possible to make such films not only at schools and at the Munk Studio. Sometimes an idea comes along and it is clear from the start that it is an idea for a short film, nothing more. Of course, distribution of short films, which currently exist mainly in the festival circuit, is also a problem.



**Meanwhile, many are waiting for your feature-length debut. Do you feel any pressure? Do you think it will increase with your Cannes debut?**

The pressure is already intense and I'm sure it will increase. But I got some advice from colleagues who have been to Cannes in previous years. They told me to be prepared for the question, "What are you working on now?" and not be afraid to talk about it, even if it is still very imperfect. Have a one-pager ready to discuss with a producer, so that people would know you are not resting on your laurels.

## **MUNK STUDIO – the producer**

Munk Studio – a Warsaw-based production studio operating within the structures of the Polish Filmmakers Association since 2008. Its original formula focuses on producing solely the first films of young directors – short features, documentaries, and animations – as well as full-length feature and documentary debuts. The aim of the Studio is to help film directors debut in a professional environment, without compromising their creative freedom. This also applies to young cinematographers, editors, actors, and production managers.

Over the past 16 years, Munk Studio produced over 300 short and feature films. Many of them premiered in renowned competitions and received awards at the most important film events – at international film festivals in Venice, Cannes, and Berlin, as well as at Sundance, SXSW, and IDFA.

Each year, at least two full-length feature debuts, eight short feature films, five short documentaries and three animations are produced. Munk Studio is an important player at the Polish film market.

The debuts produced by the Studio regularly receive nationwide theatrical distribution, and are later available at key streaming platforms. They also receive stellar reviews and win the most important national awards at Polish Film Festival in Gdynia, and Krakow Film Festival, as well as the Polish Film Awards.

Munk Studio co-produces films with leading television broadcasters – TVN Warner Bros. Discovery, CANAL+ Polska, and Telewizja Polska.

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