

PRESS KIT

TWO SHIPS



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director Jan Foukal
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screenplay Zdeněk Jecelín
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creative producer Czech Television Jaroslav Sedláček
co-producer Storm Films Frederick Howard, Petter Borgli
cinematographer Jan Šuster
editor Josef Krajbich
sound Ondřej Ježek, Adam Levý
music Albert Romanutti
production designer Ondřej Lipenský
costume designer Ivan Stekla
make-up Klára Hubalová

CAST

Eliška Křenková, Martin E. Kyšperský, Agáta Červinková, Anita Krausová, Jan Strejcovský, Nikola Mucha, Cyril Kaplan, Jiří Konvalinka and Pavel Zatloukal

genre romance, drama
Czech cinema release September 16th, 2021

77 minutes | 2D Czech version | format 2K 1:1.85 | no restrictions

SYNOPSIS

Martin (Martin Kyšperský) and Eliška (Eliška Křenková), the main protagonists of *Two Ships*, first meet at a birthday party in an abandoned part of the Brno railway station. The young psychologist invites the musician to a lecture she is giving. Martin is impressed. He circles her, she hunts him. Martin flies to Norway to see her. Once they return home, they find they can't live without each other. It's like a Hollywood romance, except set in Brno. Will cosmic love soothe all pain?



ABOUT THE FILM

Two Ships, the first feature-length film from director and musician Jan Foukal, will have its world premiere on August 23rd at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in the East of the West competition. Jan Foukal is also known in the musical world under the pseudonym Johannes Benz, and music was at the core of his previous film – the documentary *Amerika*, which was selected

for the 2015 Karlovy Vary film festival in the documentary competition. **His new film *Two Ships* is a romance featuring actress Eliška Křenková and Martin Kyšperský, frontman of the band Květy.**

Eliška and Martin, the main protagonists of *Two Ships*, first meet at a birthday party in an abandoned part of the Brno railway station. The young psychologist invites the musician to a lecture she is giving. Martin is impressed. He circles her, she hunts him. They go to a swimming pool together, a trip in the country, and even meet up in Norway. Once they return home, they find they can't live without each other. It's like a Hollywood romance, except set in Brno. He will never get her out of his head...

Director Foukal presents the audience with the story of a **fateful meeting between a musician and a psychologist** and tells us what it is like when something "big" happens. *"It's a film about the search for love. The romance genre for me is more of a guide than dogma. I could easily say it's a poem or a cinematic song... But you definitely shouldn't expect the kind of romantic comedy that is so popular in Czech cinema. Two Ships presents a fragile view of human relationships, hopefully with a broader perspective," says director Jan Foukal.*

The film was inspired by the collection of poems titled *Mart'anské lodě* written by Alena Černá and Martin E. Kyšperský. Film Kolektiv producers Silvia Michajlová and Ondřej Zima were so taken with the collection of poems that they had a screenplay written for a feature-length film based on the writings of Martin Kyšperský. Kyšperský agreed and wrote his memories down for them. The **screenplay** for *Two Ships* was written by **Zdeněk Jecelín** in cooperation with director **Jan Foukal**. The cinematographer is **Jan Šuster**, the production designer **Ondřej Lipenský** and the costume designer **Ivan Stekla**.

While there was a casting call for the lead role in *Two Ships*, musical authenticity played the deciding role. Moreover, Kyšperský had already had some acting experience in several minor roles in Czech series and films. *"Martin is truly the key character in the film. The initial story was his, based on personal experiences, and he then participated in the film as screenwriter, actor, and, of course, musically. I personally couldn't imagine trying to separate the songwriter now from the film character we present. Embracing the songs and the songwriter is essential for me. I'm quite pleased with the choice and I believe that it has imbued the film with a special, authentic spirit," says director Jan Foukal. His sentiment is reiterated by Martin Kyšperský, who feels the credibility of musical expression to be crucial. "As the film was taking shape and it was clear that the songs were going to play an important role and that the character would be a singer and guitarist, I was watching a music film one night and there was this actor holding the bass guitar in such an awkward way. I kept telling myself that if nothing else, I could at least manage that," says Kyšperský with a smile. There is an obvious chemistry between the two main protagonists on screen. According to director Foukal, this chemistry, along with the subtle perspective and elaborate visual concept of cameraman Jan Šuster, created extraordinary tension and harmony on screen. Lead actress Eliška Křenková feels the same: "Working with Martin was nice because we responded to each other naturally, there was a give and take of energy, we weren't in it for ourselves. I wanted us to be in it together. The role of Eliška was very difficult, because she had so many facets, and it was nice to have someone like Martin on the set whom you can lean on."* Also appearing in the film are Jan Strejcovský, Anita Krausová, Agáta Červinková and Pavel Zatloukal, as well as Brno songwriter and singer Nikola Mucha.

The **film's music** features a number of experienced musicians including both director Foukal and Martin Kyšperský. The musical composer was **Albert Romanutti from the band Bert and Friends**. In the words of director Foukal, working on the film's music and soundtrack was like working at a "musical deli". The film's music was recorded by the **Berg Orchestra**, directed by Romanutti, while in addition to Kyšperský the film's fictitious band **Mulet** features Jirka Konvalinka and Cyril Kaplan from the Czech bands **Vložte kočku** and **Mutantí hledají východisko**. The creators thus ran a gambit of musical stylesand the musical concept became a fundamental part of the film's narrative.

Music accompanies all the important scenes in which the film's protagonists appear. Music also plays at the moment when Eliška and Martin first meet. *"Eliška feels that Martin opens up his inner self through his music. His music resonates with her, she understands it and this helps establish their emotional relationship. She is also a psychologist who knows quite well that human personalities can be sorted into certain categories, and there are even categories that one cannot see. And music acts on a subconscious level that you cannot understand, just like love," says Martin Kyšperský.* Check

out the **music video for the film's title song Jablka (Apple) from the band Květy** here: <https://youtu.be/d1OC13nNEq8>. The film's soundtrack is available on Spotify.

Two Ships was filmed in attractive locations in Brno like the Municipal Baths in Zábřovice, the Functionalist Typos Palace, the newly reconstructed Jalta Palace, Kabaret Špaček, Kabinet múz, Bajkazyl or the Little America complex by the train station. For the final part of the shooting, however, the filmmakers visited **Norway**, specifically the **small island of Stromtangen**. *“On one side of the island was a small wooden shack with a pier, where the boats docked. On the other side was a lighthouse with a little house nearby. Otherwise, nothing. This little island was one of the most beautiful places we could have found in Norway – we didn't run into anyone, we were the only ones there, surrounded by the sea. I took pictures of the moss and lichens there that created lovely compositions. Mother Nature was really on full display there,”* says **Eliška Křenková**, **recalling the romantic filming in Norway**.

The producers of *Two Ships* are **Silvie Michajlova** and **Ondřej Zima** from **Film Kolektiv**, which also had a hand in films *The Snake Brothers*, *The Teacher*, *The Christmas King*, *Amundsen* and *The Last Aristocrat* or series such as *Sunday League*, *The Fourth Star*, *Gnome* or *The Doom of Dejvice Theater*. The co-producer of the film is the Norwegian company **Storm Films**. The film received financial support from the **Czech Film Fund** and the **South Moravian Film Fund**. This film about the fateful meeting of a musician and psychologist is being distributed by Falcon in the Czech Republic. *Two Ships* will premiere in Czech cinemas on **September 16th, 2021**.

INTERVIEW WITH ELIŠKA KŘENKOVÁ



How would you describe the main female character in Jan Foukal's new film? You and this character also happen to share the same name...

In *Two Ships* I play Eliška, a psychologist who falls in love with Martin. Together, they experience a beautiful, intense, and at the same time painful relationship. In some ways, it's an ordinary story and relationship, and in some ways it's not. It's quite remarkable for being so natural, to the point of being terribly commonplace and human. Eliška and Martin are very much in love with each other and very focused on their relationship. But at the same time, they both have strong personalities, which gives their relationship an enormous charge, but also plenty of opportunities for friction. The role of Eliška has so many facets. It's certainly the most difficult role I've ever played.

What kind of person is Martin in the film? Martin, played by Martin Kyšperský?

Martin is a songwriter in the Brno underground music scene. However, all artists are selfish in their own way. At the same time, they are easy to fall for because they have enormous charisma. And that's what happens to Eliška, who becomes a great inspiration and muse for Martin. While the film

character of Martin is based on true life, overall the characters in the film are naturally dramatized and their traits enhanced to make them easier to read. Film character Martin is very ambivalent. In one part of the story, he may seem to be an antagonist, while in another part he appears to be a protagonist. He's almost a prototype of today's man, who in some ways has stopped being manly, but still retains some remnants of an upbringing that gives him a certain sense of honor and inner strength.

When viewers watch the love story between Eliška and Martin, they think it's that "ideal"...

That is exactly what we wanted. It's just like in life. Every relationship begins with a phase of falling love, when the two people fail to see many things about each other. Perhaps they don't even want to see because they believe that this will be the one, that ideal...

Martin Kyšperský is first and foremost a musician, although he has already played a few smaller roles and looks natural on screen, he is not a professional actor. What did this mean for you as an actress?

I generally enjoy working with amateur actors. It's interesting that they don't have an actor's ego and routine. I like that a lot. At the same time, you need to adapt to that "non-acting" approach and be an open partner, which is what I tried to do.

I'm convinced that making a film is a collective effort, even among actors. I try to perform that way myself and be a team player. Working with Martin was nice because we responded to each other naturally, there was a give and take of energy, we weren't in it for ourselves. I wanted us to be in it together. The role of Eliška was very difficult, and it was nice to have someone like Martin on the set whom you can lean on.

There's also a noticeable difference in height between the two of you...

Yes, Martin is taller than the rest of the planet (laughter). The truth is when we hug in the film my head is on Martin's chest. So you can see the difference there, but I didn't find it awkward in any way... which is a sign!

Did you meet with Martin before you started shooting *Two Ships*?

I met Martin when shooting *Non-stop Deli* (TV movie, dir. Jan Hřebejk). Even back then he was talking about working on *Two Ships*, which is based on a book of poems that he co-authored. We got together and met a few times in Prague or Brno, and he even gave me the screenplay to read. In the end, he said he wanted me to play the role and conveyed that to the producers and director Honza Foukal. I don't think anyone had any objections. We just had to convince everyone that the leading lady wouldn't be a blonde. Naturally, the screenplay went through many changes after that. But in any event, I felt like I had plenty to offer the film. That's not the case with every role – when you feel like you're playing the part well and it resonates with you.

You can't make a compelling love story without having that "personal intimacy" in front of the camera and on set. Did it take long before you felt natural with each other?

When I met Martin a few months ago, we laughed because after working so closely together on *Two Ships* I feel like we're an old married couple (laughter). Maybe it doesn't sound sexy, but it's profound. I'm sure Martin knows what I mean (laughter). We're bound by a beautiful friendship.

What about humor in *Two Ships*?

There's some humor in it. A lot of humor. Everyday situations. I personally enjoyed the scene in the film where Martin drags me to his band's rehearsal with the idea of his new girlfriend singing in the band (laughter). Thanks to that I even got to sing in the film.

You also filmed in Norway. What kind of impression did that country leave on you?

The colors and nature were incredible. I think that's why the producers wanted us to shoot part of the film there. That was the first time I had been in Norway, and I was happy to be in such a beautiful place. On one side of the island was a small wooden shack with a pier, where the boats docked. On the other side was a lighthouse with a little house nearby. Otherwise, nothing. This little island was one of the most beautiful places we could have found in Norway – we didn't run into anyone, we were the only ones there, surrounded by the sea. I took pictures of the moss and lichens there that created lovely compositions. Mother Nature was really on full display there.

We were also extremely lucky with the weather. Everybody warned us that there would be insane wind. I was afraid that we would be shooting for twelve hours outside in the wind. But there was hardly any wind during shooting and the weather was beautiful.

Getting back to the essence of this film – what do you think *Two Ships* is about?

Two Ships is one hundred percent about love. I would call it a “raw romance”. It’s very poetic – thanks to the music, Brno, and director Honza Foukal, who has a poetic style that is all his own. But at the same time, the film is very truthful. It’s not embellished and it’s very powerful, because love goes hand in hand with pathos, which is very difficult to avoid. I think Honza Foukal really succeeded. I personally think the Czech Republic doesn’t have a great tradition of romance films and I’m glad that something like *Two Ships* was filmed here.

I like films that continue to resonate after you see them, films that come back to your mind and make you think – even weeks later. This happened to me, for example, after watching Jim Jarmusch’s *Only Lovers Left Alive*. I didn’t go home with a sense of catharsis, but it engulfed me, slowly, it was a powerful experience. I think that the audience may have a similar reaction to *Two Ships*. This film is also special because it is very intimate, and I think that everyone working on it grew a lot. Especially in this type of film, the connection that Martin and I had played an extremely big role.

***Two Ships* is the name of a collection of poems co-authored by Martin Kyšperský (original title: *Martánské lodě*). Does any particular poem stand out in your mind?**

I’d rather let Martin answer that, but how about: *Two Ships*, let’s go take a dip?

INTERVIEW WITH MARTIN KYŠPERSKÝ



Who do you play in the film *Two Ships*?

I play the character of Martin in *Two Ships*. A singer and songwriter. A musician who meets a girl named Eliška and then their romantic relationship unfolds. How he remembers her and sees her is actually the key to the whole story. Eliška is a young psychologist who falls in love with a singer who becomes her romantic partner. She tries to deal with one important problem that she has. And the way that she tries to do so brings other circumstances into their relationship as it develops.

What do you think *Two Ships* is about?

For me personally, *Two Ships* is a film about love. It’s about when something really big happens to you. In the film, Eliška chooses Martin and she has so much energy that she just grabs him by the collar and shoots off into space with him.

How did you get the role in *Two Ships* and how did you end up working together on this film?

I was invited to join the project by two friends, producers Silvie Michajlova and Ondrej Zima, who I met in 2015 when I was in one of their productions, the TV series *The Gnome*. We met again about a year later and were just talking about what new things we were doing and I gave them a collection of poems called *Two Ships* (original title: *Martánské lodě*), which I had jointly written, half-and-half, with Alenka Černá. And the story of Alenka and me appealed to the producers. So, they asked me if they could rework it, because they were looking for a story that would take place in Brno, a love story. I told them that I would give them some background on it, so I wrote my memories down for them. Later, when director Honza Foukal got involved, I was asked to draw on my memories to comment on the script by Zdeněk Jecelín. To make the dialogues sound authentic - the Brno dialect, for example, sounded a bit off. I also came across the paradox that although the film is based on real events, it is also not a documentary, and therefore some things that really happened lacked credibility on the screen. So we had to carefully consider which things would work on camera to make it all seem natural.

As the film was taking shape and it was clear that the songs were going to play an important role and that the character would be a singer and guitarist, I was watching a Czech music film one night and there was this actor – who I really like, incidentally – holding the bass guitar in such an awkward way. I started thinking it would be awful if someone were to play music in our story and it was filmed that badly. I had that in the back of my head all the time and I thought, if nothing else, I can manage to do that. (laughter)

How important is music in *Two Ships*?

The music in *Two Ships* can be divided into two categories. First, there is the music that was composed by Albert Romanutti from the band Bert and Friends. And then there are the songs that I play, which I wrote and perform with my band Květy.

In *Two Ships* I either play with the band or solo, and it's always an important scene with both Martin and Eliška. Music also plays when Eliška and Martin first meet. This helps them feel something that can't be put into words. It is Martin's music that makes an impression on Eliška. She watches him play and sing, and can feel how the music opens up his inner self. His music resonates with her, she understands it and this helps establish their emotional relationship. In the film, Eliška is also a psychologist who knows quite well that human personalities can be sorted into certain categories, and there are even categories that one cannot see. And music acts on a subconscious level that you cannot understand, just like love.

How did you deal with the fact that you are not a professional actor while Eliška is? After all, your role was not all that simple.

I had already had some experience. Before this film I'd already performed ten roles in various series and films, but the characters were not fleshed out enough to have any serious development or progression. There just wasn't enough time for that.

I talked a lot about my character with Eliška and director Honza Foukal. I tried to prepare for it, I thought I would just be on screen and try to be as civil as possible.

But at the same time, I knew that there would be scenes where I really had to act, emotional scenes, where I really had to draw something from myself that would work. In moments like that I just focused on the story taking place in the film.

I really enjoy films where the actors perform with minimal emotion, where the means of expression are economical. So I think the key for me to be convincing was just to act completely naturally and deliver lines in a completely normal way. So that it didn't look like I was trying to do something beyond my ability. I just let things flow, which is also the idea that director Honza Foukal had for the film. He toned down the performances of all of the actors in the film so they wouldn't be over the top.

You also basically played yourself in the film, which presents quite specific challenges. What's the difference between Martin Kyšperský and Martin in the film?

In the film, I'm basically reconstructing the situations that happened to me during two years of my life when I met a girl I started dating. But these situations had to be converted into some kind of film language. So we kept the same foundation, but once we started filming some things had to be adapted and done differently. The way the film character would do it, not how I would do it here and now. We had to be very flexible in this regard. That is probably the fundamental difference between me and the character of Martin in the film. It was surprisingly fun. But it certainly wasn't the case that I would tell the director: Wait, it wasn't really like that. During filming I didn't think about these things actually happening to me, I was distanced from it all – I just read the screenplay and then had to do

the scene. I think that was the right approach. Instead of focusing on the details of how things actually were, I tried to experience the emotions brought about by the situations.

How do you like working with director Jan Foukal?

It's fantastic. I really enjoyed shooting with Honza Foukal. Aside from being fun on the set, I think he is extremely thorough and detail-oriented and has thought things out on several levels. Whenever I asked him about anything, I could tell from his answer that he had looked at things from multiple perspectives. That let me relax because I knew he wasn't some "bozo" who did things without knowing why.

So he certainly has my admiration.

And what about Eliška Křenková? On screen it seems like you have known each other for years.

Working with Eliška was completely natural. It was a friendship. Immediately. I have that with some people and with others I don't. As soon as I started working with Eliška I just opened up completely. There was no problem, not with anything.

You're a lot taller than Eliška, how did you feel about the height difference and did you have to do anything special on account of it?

Height difference? Well, every time seeing Eliška always knocks me to my knees, so it evens out. (laughs)

***Two Ships* is a romance, a genre that's rather neglected right now in Czech cinema. Do you know of any films that are comparable to *Two Ships* in terms of atmosphere?**

I've actually been thinking about that – whether there are any films that remind me of what we made... That's not to say we're completely one-of-a-kind, but I can't think of anything. Actually, there is one. It's called *Oznamuje se láskám vašim*. It was made by Karel Kachyňa and I saw it as a child and then again as an adult. The interesting thing is that a person appreciates a film like this one way at 15, another way at 25, and another way at 40, the center of gravity from which he or she views the film shifts completely. It's about being here in the world, you have a short moment here, and during that moment a true miracle can really happen sometimes.

Most of *Two Ships* takes place in Brno and its environs. How did you enjoy the "more exotic" part of filming that took place in Norway?

I have a fear of flying, but this was worth it. It's so magical when you are on an island with a lighthouse. When you go to the mountains here in the Czech Republic, you don't realize just how enormous the pallet of colors is in the sky, for example, which changes every minute. In Norway, nature was on display in all of its glory. I was awestruck by how beautiful it is there. Imagine you are on a small island, the end of which you can see from every direction. There are rocks but no trees. Just grass and bushes. And if you look carefully, about every twenty meters the rocks are completely different. And the grass is completely different. From up close, the landscape has incredible variety. From far away it just looks like a little hill in the water, but up close it's quite amazing.

***Two Ships* is the name of a collection of poems that you Martin co-authored. Does any poem in particular come to mind about this subject matter?**

The film itself is several poems joined together. That's enough.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR JAN FOUKAL

You studied documentary filmmaking and debuted with the documentary film *Amerika*, which, by the way, was selected for the Karlovy Vary film festival. So what led you to make a feature film?

I think experience with documentary filmmaking can make you more attentive to certain things when crafting a film scene, where, unlike in a documentary, you create the world entirely anew. The eye of a documentary filmmaker can make things more realistic with details observed from life.

My path to feature films was actually simple. I received an offer from the producers I worked with on *Amerika*. From the very beginning I liked the subject matter, so we started collaborating on *Two Ships*.

The entire crew and creative team was completely on the same page, during filming it felt like I was wearing a custom-tailored suit. I couldn't imagine a better way to break into feature films.

You have your artistic fingers in many pies. Some people know you from the world of music, where you perform as a singer and writer under the pseudonym of Johannes Benz, while others might know you as a guest member of Divadlo Vosto5... Documentaries, feature films, music... which of these will be your priority going forward?

I think film is my priority. It is a comprehensive artistic discipline, a kind of decathlon, which I find very fulfilling. But I have a special relationship to music. It is an emotional expression of beauty, and that the direct transmission of energy has a very personal quality, that something special that sticks in your mind. I hope my films will be able to do this as well.

You filmed *Two Ships* based on the screenplay of Zdeněk Jecelín inspired by the eponymous collection of poems written by Alenka Černá and Martina Kyšperský. What exactly impressed you about Jecelín's screenplay?

The screenplay impressed me with its lyricism. And it's song-like form. I was also drawn by the fact that the story doesn't play out according to the rules of classic film narration but plays with the unexpected causality of fate. For me as a director, it is important to monitor the entire creative process so that the overarching idea doesn't get lost. At the same time, I wanted everything to come out of a creative dialogue. That is very important for me.

You and the producers describe *Two Ships* as a romance. Can you be more specific about the genre of your new film? Could one say that it is a film about searching for love?

I think I would agree with you there. It's a film about searching for love. The romance genre for me is more of a guide than dogma. But I could easily say that it is a poem or a cinematic song... But you definitely shouldn't expect the kind of romantic comedy that is so popular in Czech cinema. *Two Ships* presents a fragile view of human relationships, hopefully with a broader perspective.

You have already had experience with amateur actors in your documentary film *Amerika*, in which even you appear. But here there is an amateur actor right in the leading role. Since you had a classic casting call for the lead role, how did the frontman of the band Květy Martin Kyšperský get the part?

Martin is truly the key character in the film. The initial story was his, based on things he's lived through, and he then participated in the film as screenwriter, actor, and, of course, musically. I personally couldn't imagine trying to separate the songwriter now from the film character we present. Embracing the songs and the songwriter is essential for me. If I had the chance to cast Johnny Cash in a film about Johnny Cash, I would certainly do it even at the risk of a poorer acting performance instead of having some excellent actor sing his songs. That was also the case for Martin Kyšperský and I'm quite pleased with the choice. I believe it has imbued the film with a special, authentic spirit.

Even though at first glance the great difference in height between seasoned actress and singer/actor Martin Kyšperský might appear to make them incompatible, in the end the pair seems to be completely in tune with each other on-screen. What do you think was the source of this harmony?

The harmony came from the chemistry between Martin and Eliška, and also the perspective of cinematographer Honza Šuster when filming the two of them. The viewers see things through his eye and perspective. For us it was essential to create some kind of natural interplay between these elements. I suspect that, despite the height and other differences, it was quite successful, even though the cinematographer tripped dangerously several times. He even had some special wooden shoes made so he could stand twenty centimeters taller and look Martin right in the eye. But his wooden platform shoes broke and we nearly lost the camera too.

Even though the film is mainly about love, it is largely the product of men – the original story of Martin Kyšperský, then screenwriter Zdeněk Jecelín, and then you as director. Do you think that this love story will captivate male as well as female audiences?

I would dare say it's a film for both men and women, because above all it shows a relationship. And that experience is so specific that it is general. Everyone can see themselves in a mirror. When you leave the cinema you can talk to each other about, that is, if you feel like talking.

The film takes place in Brno but was also shot in Norway. What did these two locations bring to the film?

Brno is the home field, the present, civil, contemporary. Norway – a lighthouse on an island – it is actually a picture of Eliška's world, a world Martin enters both happily and unhappily.

In addition to directing, you are also a musician. Martin Kyšperský is known as a musician from Květy, in the film he has a band called Mullet, the musical composer was Albert Romanutti, who among other things is a central figure on the domestic pop music scene and frontman of Bert & Friends. The sound engineers are also award-winning Ondřej Ježek and Adam Levý. This sounds like a very promising musical line-up for a single film...

Yes, it was like being in a musical deli. The film music was recorded by the Berg Orchestra, directed by Albert. The musicians in Mullet included Jirka Konvalinka from Vložte kočku on electric violin, I think Martin recorded the theme song Jablka just on acoustic guitar. The film was mixed by Ondra Ježek. We covered a relatively wide range of music. I'm really glad the musical concept is a relatively essential part of the film's narrative.

What kind of feelings are evoked at the mention of *Two Ships*?

A special, uplifted mood that is at the same time melancholic.

