

The Museum of Modern Art

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CZECH COMEDIES OF THE 30s STARRING TEAM OF POLITICAL SATIRISTS TO BE FEATURED AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Four farcical Czech films of the 30s, written by and starring the comedy team George Voskovec and Jan Werich will be shown at The Museum of Modern Art on Thursday, September 18, in a special day-long tribute to these internationally renowned comics.

George Voskovec will be present to introduce the evening screening at 8:00 of Your Money of Your Life. There will be one showing of each comedy in its original Czech version, starting at noon, and the Museum will provide complete synopses to accompany each picture.

Voskovec and Werich became a playwriting and acting team in 1927. By the 30s, their comedy had become increasingly satirical and political in the face of the fascism of Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco. They were enormously successful and became known throughout Czechoslovakia and Europe as V & W, the clown-satirists. As Voskovec said in 1948, "We learned our first steps watching Max Linder, French circus, and American silent Westerns and two-reelers. Our classics were the three masters, Chaplin, Keaton, Lloyd. Later, a quick post-graduate course with the Marx Brothers and W. C. Fields."

During the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, Voskovec and Werich escaped to the United States, but their popularity continued to grow underground. They returned in 1946 as national celebrities and reopened their Prague theatre to packed houses. They terminated their partnership in 1948; Werich remained in Czechoslovakia and Voskovec returned to the United States, where he now acts in theatre, motion pictures, and television.

Voskovec and Werich have remained an important part of Czech culture. Their songs of the 30s were sung as "protest songs" during the Soviet invasion of 1968.

(more)

Their films have had a great influence on younger and more well-known Czech filmmakers. A.J. Liehm, the Czech film historian and author of Closely Watched Films, has written, "Without the V & W tradition, without their theatre and their films, it would be difficult to visualize the great renaissance of the Czechoslovak theatre and film of the sixties." The program follows:

GREASEPAINT AND GAS. 1931. Jindrich Honzl. With George Voskovec, Jan Werich, Ella Sarkova, J. Plachy, B. Zahorsky, M. Svitak, J. Skřivan.

69 min. Noon.

HEAVE-HO! 1934. Martin Frič. With Jan Werich, George Voskovec, Helena Bushová, J. Skřivan.

101 min. 2:00 p.m.

THE WORLD IS OURS. 1937. Martin Frič. With George Voskovec, Jan Werich, V. Smeral, Adina Mandlová, B. Zahorsky, J. Prucha, Z. Stepanek, L. H. Struna, K. Dostal.

95 min. 5:30 p.m.

YOUR MONEY OF YOUR LIFE. 1932. Jindrich Honzl. With George Voskovec, Jan Werich, Ljuba Hermanova, Hana Vitova, Theo Pistek, J. Prucha, F. Cerny.

114 min. 8:00 p.m.

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