

## Festival of Short Films No 6

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All material was adapted from various websites . . . i.e., not original.

### 1.0 Before the Law (Orson Welles 1962 USA)

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This is a parable found within THE TRIAL by Franz Kafka. In his 1962 adaptation of the novel, Orson Welles presents an animated but reduced version of the parable.

<https://courses.cit.cornell.edu/hd11/BeforeTheLaw.html>

Both BEFORE THE LAW and THE GRAND INQUISITOR by Dostoevsky (which comes from The Brothers Karamazov), gained prominence equal to if not wider than their mother novel. Often collected as short stories, both can be thought of as parables. Sadly, so far, neither parable has been directed as a film in their totality. The text is around one page and a half yet Orson Welles managed to remove many of the lovely sentences.

In literary terms, BEFORE THE LAW sits better with THE CASTLE than with THE TRIAL, as you will see.

### 2.0 L'homme sans Tête (Juan Solanas 2003 Spain)

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With two fabulous tickets to tonight's ball in his hands, the solitary Mr. Phelps needs to find the perfect head to please his charming date. Will he risk it all for love?

The man without a head was shown in Cannes Film Festival 2003.

Jury Special Prize Cannes 2003, Cesar Best Short 2004

A simple room looks out on a vast industrial landscape. The sea can be seen in the distance, melding with the horizon. The sea disappears far into the distance. A few steps are danced to an old-fashioned, rousing tune. Someone knots a bow tie. A framed photograph captures the brilliant gaze of the woman the headless man loves. He gets ready for his romantic meeting. Tonight he'll declare his love. To do so, he's decided to buy himself a head.

**Juan Solanas** (born 1966) is an Argentine film director, producer, screenwriter and cinematographer.

His film **Nordeste** was screened in the Un Certain Regard section at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival. In 2012 he has directed the French-Canadian production **Upside Down**, starring Jim Sturgess and Kirsten Dunst. He is the son of the Argentinian film director and Senator Fernando "Pino" Solanas.

### 3.0 The Old Man and the Sea (Alexander Petrov 1999 Russia)

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Painted in pastel on glass, this animation by Petrov of Hemingway's 1952 novel is a masterpiece. It does in 20 minutes more than the Hollywood in 1958 (John Sturges).

About Petrov...

[https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0678154/bio?ref=nm\\_ov\\_bio\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0678154/bio?ref=nm_ov_bio_sm)

After making his first films in Russia, in Canada he adapted the novel **The Old Man and the Sea**, resulting in a 20-minute animated short — the first large-format animated film ever made. Technically impressive, the film is made entirely in pastel **oil paintings** on glass, a technique mastered by only a handful of animators in the world.

By using his fingertips instead of a paintbrush on different glass sheets positioned on multiple levels, each covered with slow-drying oil paints, he was able to add depth to his paintings. After photographing each frame painted on the glass sheets, which was four times larger than the usual A4-sized canvas, he had to slightly modify the painting for the next frame and so on. It took Aleksandr Petrov over **two years**, from March 1997 through April 1999, to paint each of the 29,000+ frames.

For the shooting of the frames a special adapted motion-control camera system was built, probably the most precise computerized animation stand

ever made. On this an IMAX camera was mounted, and a video-assist camera was then attached to the IMAX camera. The film was highly acclaimed, receiving the Academy Award for Animated Short Film and Grand Prix at the Annecy International Animated Film Festival.

#### **4.0 Chromophobia (Raoul Servais 1966 Belgium)**

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An invading army destroys all color in a harmless town and brings it in a state of depression. Then a jester arrives.

Political allegory aimed at children using the oppression of color as a stand-in for systems of control. The film descends into a bit of a gag reel by the end, but they are funny, well realized and the design is terrific. And as it's for children, I think the straightforward approach works well.

##### **Raoul Servais**

Raoul Servais (born 1 May 1928) is a Belgian filmmaker, animator and comics artist. He is a fundamental figure of the Belgian animation scene, as well as the founder of the animation faculty of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (KASK). He was born in Ostend. Servais was awarded with Lifetime Achievement Award at the World Festival of Animated Film - Animafest Zagreb in 2016.

He is best known for the 1979 animated film **Harpya**. At the 9th Magritte Awards, Servais received an Honorary Magritte Award from the Académie André Delvaux.

#### **5.0 The Black Rider (Pepe Danquart 1992 Germany)**

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Schwarzfahrer (also known as Black Rider) is a 1992 German 12-minute short film directed by Pepe Danquart. It won an Oscar in 1994 for Best Short Subject.

The topic of the film is the daily racism a black man endures in a tram. The title is a pun: "Schwarzfahrer" usually means "fare-dodger" in German. It can be literally translated as "black traveler".

This pun forms the punch line of the short film.

**Pepe Danquart** was born on March 1, 1955 in Singen, Baden-Württemberg, Germany. He is a director, known for Off Season (1997), Black Rider (1993) and Heimspiel (2000).

## 6.0 2 + 2 = 5 (Babak Anvari 2011 Iran)

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What happens when, in an attempt to re-educate the masses, everything you have been taught is proclaimed false and your whole universe of values crumbles violently before your eyes?

In a drab, anonymous gray school governed by a strict authoritarian regime, an apparently unremarkable day is turned on its head following a seemingly ridiculous announcement. Disbelieving at first, the all-male, identically uniformed pupils are informed that what they had always been taught as fact is no longer true. When the incredulous students speak out, what initially seems laughably absurd becomes desperately real as they are forced to question how far they will go to stand up for their beliefs. *Two & Two* is an allegory for the absurdness of dictatorship and tyranny - and the resilience of the human spirit.

Nominated as Best Short Film, Bafta Film Awards, 2012.

**Babak Anvari** is a British-Iranian filmmaker. He is best known for directing horror films such as **Under the Shadow** (2016) and **Wounds** (2019).

## 7.0 Two Cars, One Night (Taika Waititi 2003 New Zealand)

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While waiting for their parents, two boys and a girl meet in the car park of a rural pub. At first, they trade insults but soon they opt to wile away the hours together. Love, it seems, can be found in the most unlikely of places.

Taiki Waititi hails from the Raukokore region of New Zealand. The film is set outside the pub at which his own parents used to drink and where he wiled away many hours as a child.

“For children, the dark world of adults is a mysterious one. It is also very boring. You make your own fun, you pick on each other, you pass the time.”

The children were all cast from a local school and although none had acted before, the lead boy won a short film award for his performance.

*TWO CARS, ONE NIGHT* was Waititi's first professional film making effort and was nominated for an Oscar. Recently, he has directed episodes of cult New Zealand comedy series: **Flight of the Conchords**.

## 8.0 Dreams (Village of the Watermills) (Kurosawa 1980)

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### From Wikipedia

Dreams is a 1990 Japanese-American magical realist film of eight vignettes written and directed by Akira Kurosawa. It was inspired by actual dreams that Kurosawa claimed to have had repeatedly.[2] It was his first film in 45 years on which he was the sole author of the screenplay. It was made five years after *Ran*, with assistance from George Lucas, Steven Spielberg and funded by Warner Bros. The film was screened out of competition at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival, and to this day has received positive reviews.

The main themes the movie addresses are: childhood, spirituality, art, death, universal disasters and man's mistakes regarding the world; all the segments of the film show a literal and a metaphorical side.

### The Village of Watermills

A young man finds himself entering a peaceful, stream-laden village. The traveler meets an old, wise man (he tells the young man that he is 103 years old) who is fixing a broken watermill wheel. The elder explains that the people of his village decided long ago to forsake the polluting influence of modern technology and return to a happier, cleaner era of society. They have chosen spiritual health over convenience and the traveler is surprised but intrigued by this notion.

At the end of the sequence (and the film), a funeral procession for an old woman takes place in the village, which instead of mourning, the people celebrate joyfully as the proper end to a good life. This segment was filmed at the Daio Wasabi farm in the Nagano Prefecture. The film ends with a haunting, melancholic excerpt from "In the Village", part of the *Caucasian Sketches*, Suite No. 1 by the Russian composer Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov.

One aspect of the village in this sequence is a large stone which local children place flowers over; the old man reveals this to be the grave of a traveler who died long ago and it has become a tradition to lay flowers over it as you pass. Kurosawa was most likely inspired by a similar stone from his father's home village:

Near the main thoroughfare of the village stood a huge rock and there were always cut flowers on top of it. All the children who passed by it picked wild flowers and laid them atop the stone. When I wondered why they did this and asked, the children said they didn't know. I found out later by asking one of the old men in the village. In the Battle of Boshin, a hundred years ago, someone died at that spot. Feeling sorry for him, the villagers buried him, put the stone over the grave and laid flowers on it. The flowers became a custom of the village, which the children maintained without ever knowing why.

Before the end credits, the young man himself pauses to lay a flower over the stone.