

KING MATT THE FIRST Creative documentary by Jaśmina Wójcik

King Matt The First

CREATIVE DOCUMENTARY BY

Jaśmina Wójcik



krolmaciuspierwszydokument

KingMattDoc

LOGLINE

A contemplative journey into the intimate lives of sisters Zoja and Lea, where curiosity leads the way, and emotions and senses serve as vital tools.

CREDITS

Original title: **Król Maciuś Pierwszy**

International title **King Matt the First**

Year: **2025**

Country: **Poland**

Runtime: **75 min.**

Language: **Polish**

Director: **Jaśmina Wójcik**

Writers: **Jaśmina Wójcik, Igor Stokfiszewski**

Cinematographer: **Jakub Wróblewski**

Editor: **Anna Garncarczyk**

Composer: **Dominik Strycharski**

Sound: **Agata Chodyra**

Producers: **Marta Duźbabel, Agnieszka Rostropowicz**
Pinot Films

Festival strategy & outreach: **Weronika Adamowska**

Co-financed by: **Polish Film Institute**

Co-producers: **FixaFilm, Wójcik/Wróblewski**

TEASER

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Will I remember what it feels like to be a child when I grow up?

Zoja, the protagonist of "King Matt the First"



[child]
 senses spring, anticipates the moment
 when man will not only communicate
 with man, not just the white man with
 the black man, the rich with the poor,
 the man with the woman and the adult
 with the child - but also with the sun and
 the stars, the water and the air, with the
 white birch and the lily of the valley, with
 the dog and the lark. He foresees that
 we will not only achieve in sweat and
 struggle, but through play and joyfull
 efforts, what mankind has been longingly
 striving for over crosses and stakes,
 in sweat and blood, tragic, lonesome and
 abandoned by God.

Janusz Korczak
 (Henryk Goldszmit)



SYNOPSIS

The world of sisters Zoja and Lea is filled with shared games, discoveries, and conversations, alongside their daily squabbles and disagreements. Initially, the girls, who bear a striking resemblance to one another, seem to share an extraordinary bond of sisterhood. However, as time passes, the older sister, Zoja, begins to grow apart from Lea. She loses interest in playing in the sand or swimming in the river, retreating into the realm of books and spending increasingly more time with her peers instead of her sister. Despite their differences, both girls share a deep-seated fear of crossing the threshold into adulthood, which they perceive

as a source of danger. They observe how adults seem indifferent to the destruction of their world, ignoring environmental catastrophes and fueling war conflicts. Jaśmina Wojcik's creative documentary, "King Matt the First", invites us into a realm unbound by adult hierarchies and constraints. It offers a contemplative journey into the intimate lives of the protagonists, where curiosity leads the way, and emotions and senses serve as vital tools. Yet, contemporary crises—war, pandemics, and climate disasters—echo ominously in the background. Can we truly determine when childhood ends and adulthood begins?

As adults, do we actually remember what it's like to be a child? And when we enter adulthood, don't we lose a sense of vulnerability forever? Most importantly, what can children teach us if we simply listen to their words? These questions, among many others, are explored in Jaśmina Wojcik's film, inspired by Janusz Korczak's (Henryk Goldszmit) novel of the same name. More than a century after its publication, the author's words remain profoundly relevant, resonating with the tensions and uncertainties of today's reality—especially from the perspective of young people standing on the brink of adulthood.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I am a director, artist, educator, and mother. For years, I have worked with communities that lack visibility and expression, including a decade spent with the former workers of the Ursus tractor factory, which resulted in the documentary "Symphony of the Ursus Factory". My goal has been to give these communities a voice and engage them in the process of creating their own narratives.

For the past ten years, I have been actively involved in empathetic education, developing original practices for children's artistic expression. I strive to empower children by treating them as co-creators and inviting them into the dialogue. A key figure in my work is Janusz Korczak (Henryk Goldszmit), an educator, doctor, and writer who lived at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. He tragically died with the children from his orphanage at the Treblinka concentration camp. His daily practices, research, and writings were dedicated to understanding children, their subjectivity, vulnerability, and the right to self-determination. I believe Korczak's insights are essential for us today. If we fail to learn sensitivity from children and recognize the truth in their perspectives, we are heading towards disaster. The simplicity of life, being

present in the here and now, and the constant movement between the real and imagined worlds are just some of the natural abilities of every child, as well as adults who have preserved that part of their sensitivity. "King Matt the First" represents the culmination of my search as a mother, artist, director, educator, and human being. It is a personal voice advocating for the preservation of childhood, recognizing the essence of humanity in children, trusting them, and following their openness and needs—while also maintaining the nurturing framework and safety of the process, a responsibility that rests with the adults. The film is set in a time similar to that of Korczak's novel, which was written between the First and the Second World Wars. It reflects the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, as well as the wars in Ukraine (from 2022) and Gaza (from 2023). The film serves as a plea for a sensitivity revolution, one that learns from kids and reconnects us with our inner child. In the film, we see the perspective of an adult who crouches beside the children to be at their eye level. This observation is made possible because the children trust this adult, mirroring the approach I take in my work with them.



The film “King Matt the First” is an invitation to a deeply intimate, poetic, and beautiful journey into the heart of paradise. At its gates, reality increasingly knocks louder with each passing day, drawing the two young protagonists closer to adulthood. This journey is both touching and moving—poetic, full of mystery, and driven by a wild, innocent, and unbridled imagination. Interestingly, by placing her daughters in front of the camera, the filmmaker herself becomes a protagonist in the story. Children act as a mirror for their parents, and through this film, we are given the chance to see ourselves anew. I’m deeply grateful to Jaśmina for this opportunity and wholeheartedly recommend “King Matt the First” to anyone who occasionally reflects on life’s most essential questions.

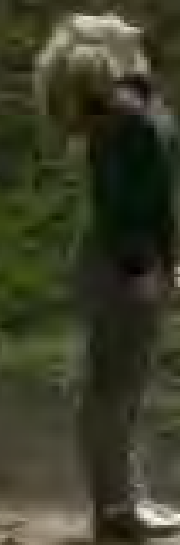
Izabela Łopuch

producer,
Member of European Film Academy

An inspiring and refreshing adaptation of a classic of Polish literature, Janusz Korczak reinterpreted in alignment with his true spirit. It provides a thoughtful exploration of the emotional world of children and teenagers, a world vastly different from our own. This fresh lens reveals new insights and reawakens the freedom, creativity, and richness found in the fleeting moments of free time. Korczak serves as both inspiration and starting point, and his message resonates powerfully in 2025—when we need, more than ever, stories that highlight the strength of sisterhood, the importance of closeness, and the value of kindness toward others, regardless of their age.

Wojciech Diduszko

Head of Polish Competition, Millennium Docs
Against Gravity Film Festival



ABOUT THE PROCESS

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a lit sparkler. The sparkler is the central focus, with bright white and yellow sparks radiating from its tip. The background is dark, making the sparks stand out. The hand is partially visible, holding the metal stem of the sparkler.

JAŚMINA WÓJCIK:

When we didn't have our own children, we were great at theoretical parenting. Everything changed when our daughters were born. Nothing was clear-cut or permanent anymore; we were accompanied by constant change. It was from them—and with them—that we learned, and continue to learn, our parenting.

JAKUB WRÓBLEWSKI:

Zoja and Lea live in a world that is inaccessible to most adults. Their reality is beautiful and pure, filled with values that are meaningful to them.

JAŚMINA:

The process of working on the film involved four years of parents, children, and the film crew living together as one. We are a neurodiverse family that spends a lot of time together. We love each other, we fight, and we're honest with one another—which is not easy when honesty goes both ways.

JAKUB:

Accompanying children from behind the lens is difficult; you can't fully participate in their games and activities. At the same time, the lens creates a distance that allows for more careful observation. It provides a fuller picture of the children's abilities.

JAŚMINA:

During filming, we tried to make the girls feel safe. We followed them and were always next to them—me with the microphone and Kuba with the camera

JAKUB:

The universe depicted in the film is a world of children open to different attitudes, immersed in nature, and changing with the rhythm of the seasons. The aesthetic of the narrative reflects their unique space, which they allowed us to enter. We witnessed a unique moment that will never be repeated.

JAŚMINA:

As we worked on the film, we were constantly accompanied by editor Ania Garnarczyk, whose attentive eye, heart, sensitivity, and professionalism helped shape the story. Each successive cut of the film was, of course, viewed and discussed with Zoja and Lea.

JAKUB:

King Matt the First is also a reflection on us as parents observing our daughters' processes of change and the emergence of new needs in their lives. It's an attempt to connect with children as they enter adulthood.

JAŚMINA:

Zoja and Lea change every day. But what is remarkable is their unwavering commitment, sensitivity, ingenuity, and their unique way of looking at the world.

Project developed and presented at:

2020 – HER Docs Film Festival, workshop with Zeynep Güzel
2020 – CEDOC Co-Production Market, 60th Krakow Film Festival
2020-2021 – SKOK W DOK. Laboratory of documentary concepts (Tutors: Katarzyna Lesisz, Maciej Cuske, Coordinator: Karolina Śmigiel), Andrzej Wajda Centre for Film
2021 – When East Meets West (Tutors: Leena Pasanen, Stefano Tealdi)
2021 – goEast - East-West Talent Lab, goEast Development Award
(Jury: Marjorie Bendeck, Björn Koll, Christoph Thoke)
2023 – Progress Pitching Session, MDAG Industry

Support during the development phase:

Hanka Kastelicová, Joanna Szymańska, Izabela Łopuch, HBO

A poetic, touching film that illustrates how the magic of childhood can transition into adolescence, showing that this shift doesn't have to mean giving up on experiencing the everyday wonders of the world. The wisdom of the sisters, as they weave new threads of understanding between them, allows adults to momentarily pull back the veil of maturity and see beauty through a child's eyes.

Magdalena Gawron

educator

An incredibly beautiful, sensual, and moving visual experience.

Anka Wandzel

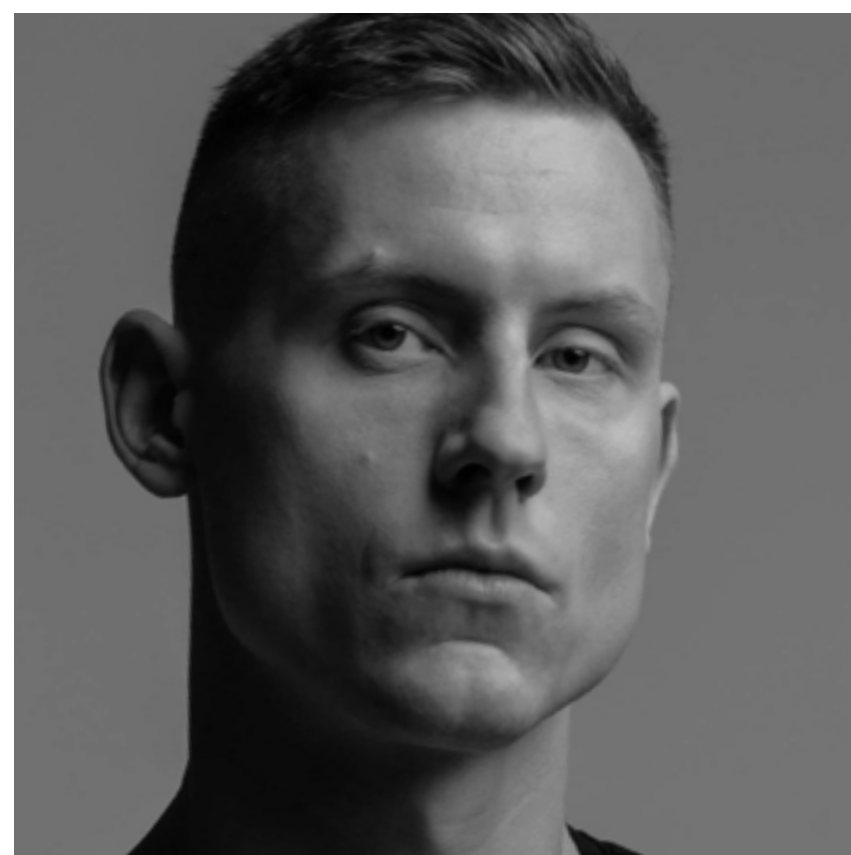
a scholar of cultural studies, essayist and researcher on the relationship between art, plants and the work of care



DIRECTOR, WRITER

Jaśmina Wójcik

Director, visual artist, and creator of listening-oriented participatory socio-artistic actions. She focuses on the inclusion and empowerment of communities that lack visibility and opportunities for expression. She is the author of the award-winning creative documentary "Symphony of the Ursus Factory" (2018), which has been screened at festivals including IFFR Rotterdam, Hot Docs, DOK Leipzig, DOC NYC, RIDM, and Millennium Docs Against Gravity. The film was also nominated for the Cinema Eye Honors and ORLY film awards. She received grants from the Minister of Culture and National Heritage in 2007 and 2013. Winner of prizes and awards for her artistic work, including first prize at the Samsung Art Master Competition in 2007. Her works have been exhibited and can be found in the collections of the Zachęta National Art Gallery, the Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art and the Bunkier Contemporary Art Gallery. For several years she has been involved in empathic education, developing original practices for children's artistic expression. She gives children agency and subjectivity, treating them as co-creators and inviting them into dialogue. Currently, Wójcik mainly focuses on bottom-up educational initiatives, resulting in her new film based on Janusz Korczak's novel of the same name, "King Matt the First".



CINEMATOGRAPHER

Jakub Wróblewski

Interdisciplinary artist, creator, and researcher, he is a director, cinematographer, and producer of interactive VR experiences. He works with audiovisual storytelling, immersive activities, and artistic and scientific projects, including video, interactive film, and graphic design. Currently, he is interested in mixed reality, game engines, and activities involving 3D and VR technology, as well as the question of embodiment. His research scope is broad, and his artistic strategy focuses on exploring and expanding the boundaries of the medium he engages with. He is the author of the visual grammar in the film "Symphony of the Ursus Factory" by Jaśmina Wójcik and the creator of an interactive adaptation of James Joyce's last novel, "First We Feel Then We Fall" (in collaboration with Dr. Katarzyna Bazarnik from Jagiellonian University). A recipient of the Młoda Polska scholarship, he is also a winner of the Grand Prix at the Szajna Multimedia Festival. He is a founding member of the Inxistsens creative collective, the founder of the Narration Systems Open Lab, and a guest lecturer at the Speakers Avenue Training Institute. Additionally, he co-founded the Virtual Occurrences Horizons portal and runs his own 3D and Virtual Occurrences Studio II at the Faculty of Media Arts, Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw.



EDITOR

Anna Garnarczyk

Graduated from the Department of Film and Television Directing at the Lodz Film School, she has gained experience in both her own artistic projects and commercial cinema. While still a student, she made her debut as an editor on the feature film "Tower. A Bright Day", directed by Jagoda Szalc (2017). Since then, she has continued to collaborate with the director on various cinema and series projects, as well as theatre productions. She made her documentary film debut alongside Agata Cierniak in "Silent Love", directed by Marek Kozakiewicz (2022). Additionally, she has worked as a scriptwriter and DIT. Her films have been screened and awarded at prestigious festivals, including the Berlinale, the International Film Festival Rotterdam, the Mammoth Lakes Film Festival, the Los Angeles Film Festival, the Sydney Film Festival, the Slamdance Film Festival, DOK Leipzig, the New Horizons International Film Festival, Off Camera, and the Polish Film Festival in Gdynia. She is also a co-editor of Netflix productions such as "Mothers of the Penguins", "Erotica 2022", the Viaplay series "Stroke", and "Belfer 3" for Canal+.



COMPOSER

Dominik Strycharski

Composer, flutist, singer, improviser, performer, and publicist. He plays and composes contemporary jazz in various forms, as well as contemporary music, electronic music, post-hip-hop, noise, and diverse styles of improvised music. He has recorded over 35 albums in different ensembles. A winner of the 2021 Polityka's Passport Award, he is dedicated to contemporary electroacoustic music, employing unorthodox techniques and stylistic combinations. He actively develops the contemporary language of the simple flute and the human voice, integrating them with electronics. He has collaborated with artists such as Mikołaj Trzaska, Agustí Fernández, Rafał Mazur, Joëlle Léandre, Núria Andorrà, Wojciech Waglewski, Adam Pierończyk, Jan Peszek, and Barbara Drajzkowska. As a theatre artist, he has composed stylistically varied music for over 90 performances and projects by stage directors including Paweł Łysak, Bartosz Szydłowski, Michał Zadara, Paweł Świątek, Wojtek Klemm, Katarzyna Radaszyńska, Jan Peszek, Anna Badora, Wojtek Urbański, Kuba Roszkowski, and many others. His music is performed widely across Poland and internationally. He is the composer of the scores for the films "Symphony of the Ursus Factory" and "King Matt the First", directed by Jaśmina Wójcik, where his music plays a significant role. He is also the creator of the world's only sound diary, which now includes nearly 500 pieces.



WRITER

Igor Stokfiszewski

Cultural researcher and manager, film scriptwriter, and playwright, he is a participant and initiator of community theatre, engaged art, and activism. He has worked with the Łaźnia Nowa Theatre in Kraków, the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards in Pontedera, Italy, the German collective Rimini Protokoll, and artists such as Jaśmina Wójcik, Artur Żmijewski, Paweł Althamer, and Katarzyna Górna. As a playwright, he has produced works directed by Wojtek Klemm, Agnieszka Olsten, Bartosz Szydłowski, and Alicja Borkowska at renowned venues including the National Old Theatre in Kraków, the Studio Theatre, the Powszechny Theatre in Warsaw, and the Współczesny Theatre in Wrocław. He co-curated artistic and social activities in post-industrial spaces, such as "Plants: Ursus 2014" and "Ursus - A Walk in Time" (2015). He was a member of the team for the 7th Biennale of Contemporary Art in Berlin (2012) and is a co-author of film scripts by Jaśmina Wójcik and Greg Zgliński. He has authored the books "The Political Turn" (2009) and "The Right to Culture" (2018), and edited the e-book "Culture and Development: Beyond Neoliberal Reason" (2017). He is also a co-editor of several volumes, including "Art with Community" (2018), "Culture and Development: Analyses, Recommendations, Case Studies" (2016), "Built the City: Perspectives on Commons and Culture" (2015), and "Jerzy Grotowski: Collected Texts" (2012). He is a member of the Krytyka Polityczna team.



PRODUCER

Marta Duźbabel

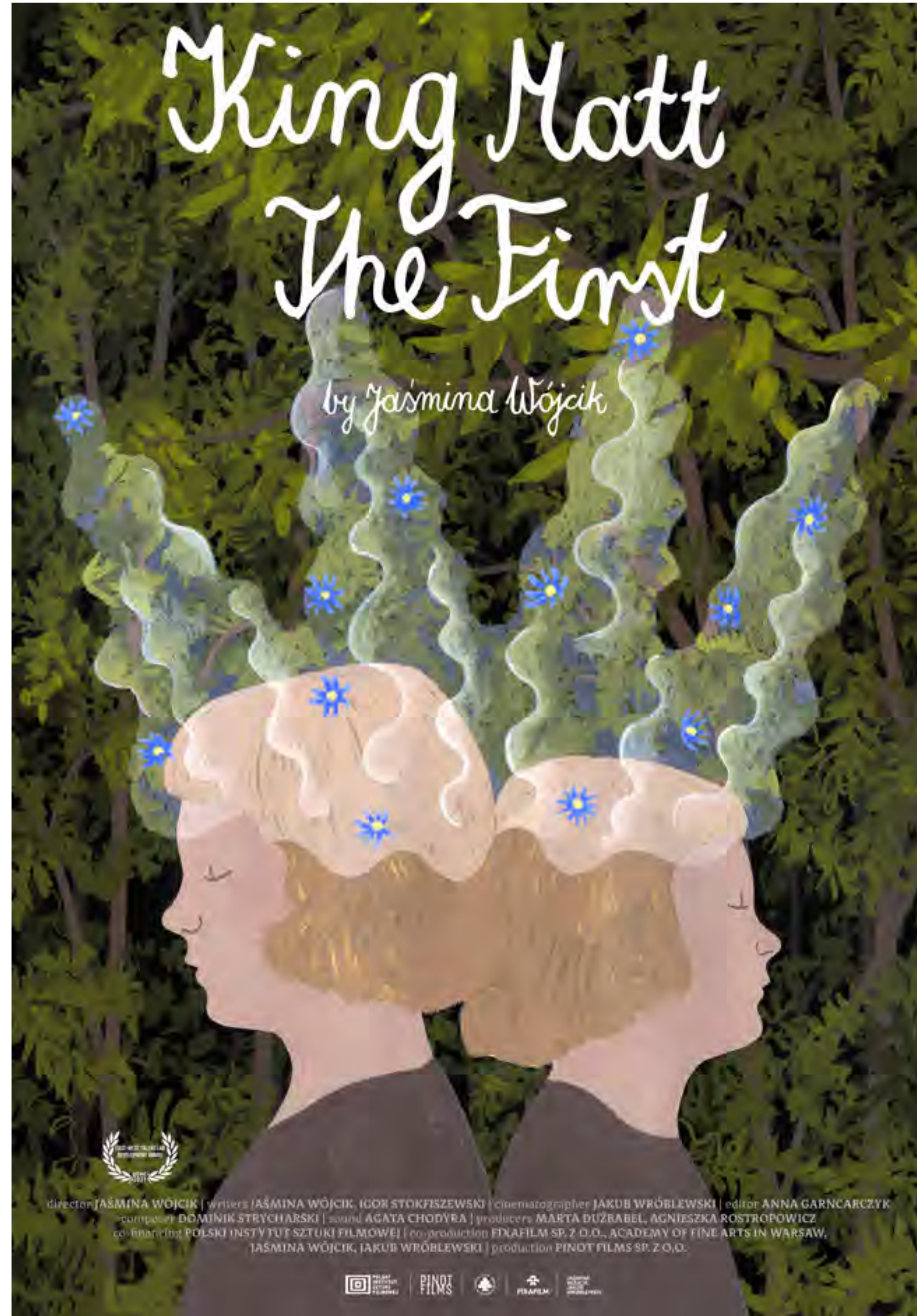
For many years, she served as a commissioning editor at Polish Public Television (TVP), where she oversaw the production of internationally award-winning films such as Marta Prus' "Over the Limit", Karolina Bielawska's "Call Me Marianna", Michał Marczak's "All These Sleepless Nights", and Paweł Ziemilski's "In Touch". She also works with the large media group ATM GROUP, where she is the lead producer on numerous documentary projects.



PRODUCER

Agnieszka Rostropowicz

For over 15 years, she has worked across all genres of film, focusing on marketing, festival, and distribution strategies. She has contributed to promotional campaigns for films nominated for major awards, including the Oscars® ("Joanna" by Aneta Kopacz, "Communion" by Anna Zamecka, and "Acid Rain" by Tomasz Popakul), as well as the European Film Awards ("Paparazzi" by Piotr Bernaś and "Communion" by Anna Zamecka). Additionally, she was involved in the promotion of Daria Wozsek's "Marygoround" and Jaśmina Wójcik's "Symphony of the Ursus Factory".



Pinot Films

Creative production company offering professional film production services as well as marketing and distribution support.

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