



# UTOPIANS

A film by Zbigniew Bzimek

Running Time: 84 min

Completed January 2011

World premiere:

Berlin International Film Festival 2011 (Forum)

**CONTACT:**

Made Up Language LLC

38 E Broadway, #4, New York, NY 10002

madeuplanguage@gmail.com

**PRESS INQUIRIES:**

Kamila Slawinski PR

kamila@kamilaslawinski.com



**It gets better with time. (...) Imagine the Occupy movement's answer to "On the Road," where people don't get very far, and end up resisting archetypes, rote patterns, and structures by simply floating above being defined, recognizing that being lost is a political stance. Subversive, unbothered, funny, these world-weary characters and their relationships, spin around, defiantly, in search of something other. – Richard Maxwell**

**Fletcher...brings a gravitas to Roger, depicting him as a hapless crazy of admirable moral stature. – Hollywood Reporter**



# SYNOPSIS

The main protagonist of *UTOPIANS*, Roger, is a struggling yoga teacher and single father (Jim Fletcher) who reunites with his daughter Zoe (Courtney Webster) as she unexpectedly returns home from military service. When Zoe gets back together with her mentally unstable girlfriend Maya, the father becomes entangled in the ups and downs of their relationship. Roger's few remaining students begin to lose patience as he becomes increasingly late and distracted during his classes; bringing a stray dog to class is the last straw that makes them look for enlightenment elsewhere. As Maya, freshly released from the hospital, moves in with Zoe and Roger, the three find themselves broke, homeless, and stuck with each other. When Morris, a well-meaning friend of Roger's (Arthur French) offers them a live-in renovation job, they jump at the chance and end up feeling a little too comfortable in their new reality. As memories of their turbulent recent past finally have the space to come to the fore, Roger starts resenting the renovation work. He changes the locks on Morris and escapes into his head, to where dreams and memories have no boundary.

Inspired by writings of Robert Walser (*Jakob Von Gunten*, *Der Spaziergang/The Walk*, *Geschwister Tanner/The Tanners*), this experimental narrative explores the question whether the Walzerian kind of modest but proud, stubborn and uncompromising spirituality represented by the main character can be accepted by society at large and shared with other people.



ZBIGNIEW BZYMEK, PHOTO BY ROBERT MLECZKO

# DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Zbigniew Bzymek, called “a young filmmaker to follow” by Cahiers du Cinéma, is a graduate of the renowned “Filmówka” – The Polish National Film School in Łódź, known as alma mater of many major Polish filmmakers, including Krzysztof Kieslowski and Małgorzata Szumowska. In 2009, he received the Gregory Millard Fellowship in film from The New York Foundation for the Arts. As a member of the legendary New York City-based collective The Wooster Group since 2006, Zbigniew has been active as a theatre/ video artist, film director and cinematographer, collaborating on the video design for The Wooster Group’s critically acclaimed opera *La Didone* and their ground-breaking *Hamlet*.

Bzymek’s first film *Nagle na zawsze (Suddenly Forever)* received the Grand Prix Du Jury at Rencontres Internationales Henri Langlois in Poitiers in 2008 as well as a number of Polish film awards. His first narrative feature, *Utopians*, premiered at The Berlin International Film Festival in 2011 and was subsequently picked up for theatrical distribution in Germany by the ARSENAL: Institut für Film und Videokunst. He recently completed his first music video for Mary Komasa’s debut single *City of My Dreams* (Warner Music), which was just nominated for the annual Yach Film Festival of music videos in Poland.

Bzymek’s work has been screened at Berlinale, Sundance, Locarno, BAM Cinefest, Anthology Film Archives, CPH-PIX, New Horizons (Wrocław), Belfort Entrevues, Next Reel (Singapore), FilmPolska, East End Film Festival (London), Mediawave International Festival, Bologna Film Festival, Off Cinema International Festival, The Polish National Film Festival, Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa (Rio de Janeiro) and the Düsseldorf Filmmuseum. He holds a master of arts degree in directing from The Polish National Film School in Łódź as well as a bachelor of arts degree in English and Russian from Bowdoin College.

[An interview with Zbigniew Bzymek, by Gabriela Seidel-Hollaender](#)



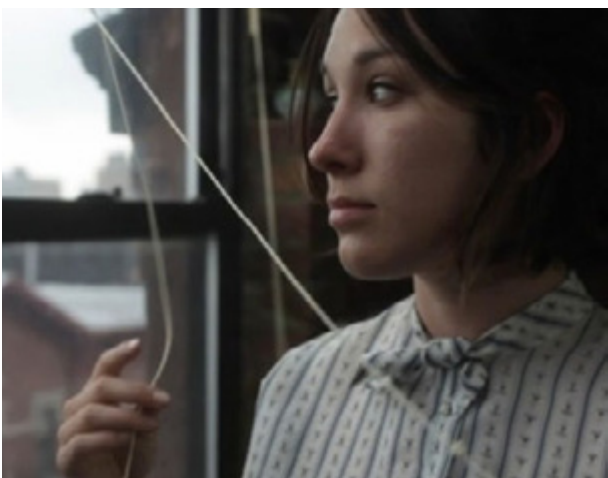
# CAST AND CREW



**JIM FLETCHER** is a well-known figure of the downtown theatre scene, known mostly for his collaboration with Richard Maxwell's New York City Players that has spanned for over a decade. He has played Gatsby in *Gatz* – the Elevator Repair Service's award-winning adaptation of F.S. Fitzgerald's famous novel – which has toured throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. *Utopians* aside, his film credits include *Bass Ackwards* (2010) and *Heebie Jeebies* (2012). He has worked with many of New York's downtown theatre companies. In 2011, he performed in *Devotion*, a dance piece choreographed by Sarah Michelson.



**COURTNEY WEBSTER** is a New York City-based filmmaker. *The Hustlers* (2008) – a debut short which she wrote, directed and produced – screened at the NY Underground Film Festival and at The M.A.L.I. fest in Austin Texas (2008). Her film debut was the main protagonist of Steve Staso's feature *Cellar* (2010), which toured internationally on the festival circle. *Utopians* is her second principal role in a feature-length film, but a debut in a dual role of actor/producer.



**LAUREN HIND** has been involved in variety of projects including narrative and experimental film, television, music videos, commercials, and web based media. As a producer and filmmaker she seeks to ignite discussions on gender, identity and human sexuality. She is a member of Women in Production NYC and NYWIFT's Next Wave. She made her acting debut in Steve Staso's *Cellar* (2010). *Utopians* is her first feature film as producer and actor.



The Polish National Film School alumnus **ROBERT MLECZKO** is one of Poland's foremost independent cinematographers. His credits include Anna Jadowska's feature films *Out of Love* (2010), *It's Me Now* (2005) and *Touch Me* (2003), all of which received theatrical distribution in Poland and have been shown at festivals worldwide. Beyond cinema, he has collaborated with acclaimed performance artists and curator Artur Zmijewski and Krystian Lupa.

**KEVIN PALMER** is a film and commercial editor based in New York. He has collaborated with Bill Plympton on his two most recent animated features *Cheatin'* (2013) and *Idiots and Angels* (2008). His other editorial credits include Young Jean Lee's experimental documentary *Here Come the Girls* (2013), and short films by Zbigniew Bzymek (*Nagle na zawsze*, 2007) and Mariko Saga (*Vena Cava*, 2009).

Guitarist and composer **HARVEY VALDES** has worked on projects ranging from free jazz, electronic world music, Middle Eastern/Balkan jazz to avant-rock. He is also an associate artist with The Wooster Group and has contributed to their production of Francesco Cavalli's 1641 opera *La Didone*. His compositions expand the capacity of the guitar through the use of loops unearthing the musical color in effects and highlighting texture as a distinct compositional element. This experimentation results in sensitively layered sonic canvases. His album *Tesla Coils* (recorded with Blaise Siwula and Gian Luigi Diana) was released in May of 2014.

**ARTHUR FRENCH** is an American actor and director who worked extensively with the Negro Ensemble Company, St. Marks Playhouse, La MaMa Theater, and many other important ensembles and venues of the NYC's off-off-Broadway scene. His film and television credits include *Kinsey* (2004), *Zenith* (2010), and *Forged* (2010).

# CREDITS

Writer/Director/Producer:  
**ZBIGNIEW BZYMEK**

Producers:  
**LAUREN HIND, COURTNEY WEBSTER, DANIEL GROSSMAN**

Co-Producer/Editor: **KEVIN PALMER**

Director of Photography:  
**ROBERT MLECZKO**

Original Music by  
**HARVEY VALDES**

## CAST

Roger: **JIM FLETCHER**

Zoe: **COURTNEY WEBSTER**

Maya: **LAUREN HIND**

Morris: **ARTHUR FRENCH**

Deborah: **JESSICA JELLIFFE**

Agnes: **SACHA YANOW**

Dr. L: **KATE VALK**

Dr. A: **DAVE ORES**

Wanda: **ALMY ALONSO**

Little Boy: **ROAN HOLMES**

Lola's Partner: **KATE MORAN**

Andrew: **ALESSANDRO MAGANIA**

Additional Dr.: **ALEXIS MORELY**

Doctor at Elevator: **OMAR KNOWLES**

Roger's Yoga Students:

Ivan: **JULIA TORRES**; Sergey:

**VON CHORBAJIAN**; Lola:

**ILSE "BOOGIE" RUMES**

Other Students:

**JAMES ORLANDO, DANIELLE DUGUAY**

Andrew's Yoga Students:

**HEATHER BLANCHARD, MATTHEW**

**REBULA LUKAS VOLGER, BATOR**

**KALO, HYEWON YI, TYLER JACOB**

**ROLLINSON MICHELE CAPPELLO,**

**SHIZU HOMMA**

Ballet Students:

**ESSENCE JACKSON, SIMA**

**SADYKHOV MARIE NAUMENKO,**

**LIVIA REMY, ANEVAY DARLINGTON,**

**TRINITY E. SAZO**

And featuring **ANDY THE DOG**

## ADDITIONAL CREW

Consulting Producer: **LANCE DOTY**

Location Sound Mixers: **JAMES TELFER, JOSHUA HILLSON, JULIA ROBERTS**

B Camera Operators:

**ANDREY ALISTRATOV RACHAEL ABERNATHY**

Assistant Camera:

**ANDREY ALISTRATOV, RACHAEL ABERNATHY, WREN WARNER, ERIC ADLER, LUIGI BENVISTO, MILES DUPREE**

Digital Tech: **MICHAEL DZURAK**

Key Grip: **JOSHUA YANCEY**

Gaffer: **THOMAS CRILLEY**

Electric: **ANANDA STRAZZINI**

Wardrobe Assistant: **LISA LOEW**

Hair & Makeup: **YOUNG BEK**

Assistant Make Up: **LISA IADAROLA**

Travel Coordinator: **KEVIN JENKINS**

Key Production Assistant:

**HEATHER BLANCHARD**

Production Assistants:

**DANIEL FERREIRA, JAMES OSEI, LORENA DENISE**

ReRecording Engineer, Sound Editor and Sound Mixer: **JO CUNNINGHAM**

Color Correction: **ROBERT MLECZKO**

Visual Effects: **PAUL FERNANDEZ**

On-line Editor: **KEVIN PALMER**

Editorial Intern: **MORGAN STEHR**

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Archival Footage: **RICK HIND**

Production Counsel: **FERNANDO RAMIREZ**

Script Consultants: **MARIKO SAGA AND JULIA TORRES**

## SPECIAL THANKS

**BECKY BRAUER**

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**FORSTER**

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**LIZ LECOMPTE**

**IKE HOBBS**

**NINA MACINTOSH**

**LUCIEN ZAYAN**

**RICHARD PIEKOS**

**DANNY FOX**

**STEVE STASO,**

**ANYA SELVARATNAM SCHEIB**

**CASEY SPOONER**

**LELE ENGLER**

**KRYSTIAN LUPA**

**MARIKO SAGA**

**CLAUDIA SCHLOSBERG**

**ALEXANDRA HIND**

**CYNTHIA HEDSTROM**

**ARCHIE CIOTTI**

**JOHN SACCO**

**LANI STEINHOUSE**

**JASON HAYMOND**

**LANCE DOTY AND CHARLY BENDER**

**DANNY ROVIRA**

**LINDA HAYES**

**SHARON WEBSTER**

**NINA SABGHIR**

**PETER BUXTON**

**DANIELLE WALKER**

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**RICH HOXSEY EVA RADKE**

**FILMBIZ RECYCLING EXPENDABLES PLUS**

**KITS AND EXPENDABLES**

**WOODHULL HOSPITAL HERO**

**WARDROBE FOGLIGHT FILMS**

**THE INVISIBLE DOG**

**AVIATOR HOCKEY CENTER FOR**

**PERFORMANCE RESEARCH**

**BROOKLYN BLADES**

**THE HUMANE SOCIETY**

**WHATSYOUR20WALKIE**

**NEW YORK FRIED CHICKEN**

**CHIPOTLE**

Filmed on Location in Brooklyn, NY