

A person is shown in silhouette, playing a violin. The scene is dimly lit, with a large, abstract blue projection on the wall behind them. The text is overlaid on the projection.

**Magnetic  
Fields  
by Jan  
Svankmajer**

A "film-concert"  
performance

# Magnetic Fields by Jan Svankmajer

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Created by the talented video director, musician and composer François Sarhan, **Magnetic Fields of Jan Svankmajer** is above all a tribute to the great art of the Czech film director. A continuous projection of five short "cult" films by Svankmajer is accompanied by live music performed by the Prague Modern Ensemble, playing an original and unique score composed by François Sarhan. In addition, two female sound effects artists who have worked with Svankmajer in the past create *in vivo* noises for the pictures. During the interludes, short vocal and body works based on aphorisms from the Svankmajer Decalogue are performed by the musicians.

Cleverly mixing images, sounds, melodies, words, songs, colors and atmosphere, **Magnetic Fields** is a subtle and mesmerizing work. The combination of the screen, stage and auditorium create an organic entity in which the magic specific to Svankmajer's art is brought to life with primitive force, deeply captivating the audience.

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*Use animation as a magical act.*  
**Jan Svankmajer - Décalogue III**



***Magnetic Fields* by Jan Svankmajer**

**Duration: 1h20**

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**Music by François Sarhan**

**Ensemble Prague Moderne**

**Gabriela Vermelho** voice, quinton

**David Danel** violin, double bass

**Petr "Pepino" Valášek** clarinet, bass clarinet

**Vojtěch Procházka** keyboards, synthesizer

**Čtibor Bártek** percussions

**Olga Čechová, Jaroslava Hlavešová** sound effects

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**Animated films by Jan Svankmajer:**

***Tychy tyden v dome / A Quiet Week at Home* (1969, 19', color)**

Theme: The walls of a house abound with shadowy illusions.

Are they real or imaginary?

Technique: Live-action shooting, animated objects

***Byt / The Flat* (1968, 12'30, black and white)**

Theme: A crazy comedy where objects are in rebellion, leaving an alienated human trapped.

Technique: Live-action shooting, animated objects

***Jidlo / Food* (1992, 17', color)**

Theme: An allegory about human cannibalism.

Technique: Live-action shooting, animated plastiline figures

***Moznosti dialogu / Dimensions of Dialogue*  
(1982, 11'30, color)**

Theme: Built as a triptych (objective dialogue /passionate dialogue/ exhausting dialogue), the film examines with astonishing speed a fragment of history from the Renaissance to the present.

At the same time, in a very "carollian" way of performing, it shows all possible postures of human body language and communication. Technique: Animated objects and plastiline

***Tma - Svetlo - Tma / Darkness-Light-Darkness*  
(1989, 7'30, color)**

Theme: An allegory of the absurdity of the human condition, where one of the themes is the same as "Something from Alice," and the aesthetic matches the "exhausting dialogue" of "Dimensions of Dialogue."

Technique: Animated objects and plastiline

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***The point you should not lose sight of is synaesthesia.***

**Jan Svankmajer - Décalogue V**



### **A special tribute**

Expanding on the emotional experience one goes through when seeing a Jan Svankmajer film, this materialization of synesthesia extends the space around the screen, filling it with the magnetic vibrations that exist in his pictures.

Thus, **Magnetic Fields of Jan Svankmajer** is more than a film-concert. It is a total, integrated performance that combines sounds, pictures, songs, words and improvisation with different themes and atmospheres. Based on the continuous screening of five films, the work is a polysemous event that catalyzes the attention of the spectator, echoing the many methods that Svankmajer uses to extend his reach beyond the screen, like an alchemist. Of course the chosen films already have a soundtrack, but this adds a unique musical creation which either replaces the original soundtrack or embellishes it. The music and sounds enlighten, underline or redefine the meaning. The use of a central musical theme creates a link between the films, reinforcing the strong unity in the work of a poet for whom methods are superficial. In the end, the purpose is to create a new understanding that challenges the viewer with the same techniques that the films use: destruction, cannibalism, eroticism...

Created with the approval of Svankmajer, the performance is at once a special tribute to his great Art and a continuation of the "magical act" which is, for him, animation.

*François Sarhan*



### **François Sarhan, Composer**

Since the creation of his first work - *Esquisse pour la Fleur Inverse N°1*, performed at the *Théâtre des Champs Elysées* in 1995 for Pierre Boulez's 70th birthday - François Sarhan has expanded his repertoire in all genres: chamber music, orchestral, opera (*Kyrielle du Sentiment des Choses*, composed for the Lyrical Art Festival of Aix-en-Provence in 2003) and electronic music. Not merely a composer, he creates animation and video films and conceives multidisciplinary performances. He defines his idea of music in *Introduction à l'histoire de la musique* (Flammarion 2004) and on various subjects in the forthcoming book *Encyclopédie*. He recently completed *A King, Lear*, incorporating original text from Jacques Roubaud. François Sarhan has been artist-in-residence at the Orléans Theater - Scène Nationale since September 2009.

/ [www.sarhan.net](http://www.sarhan.net)

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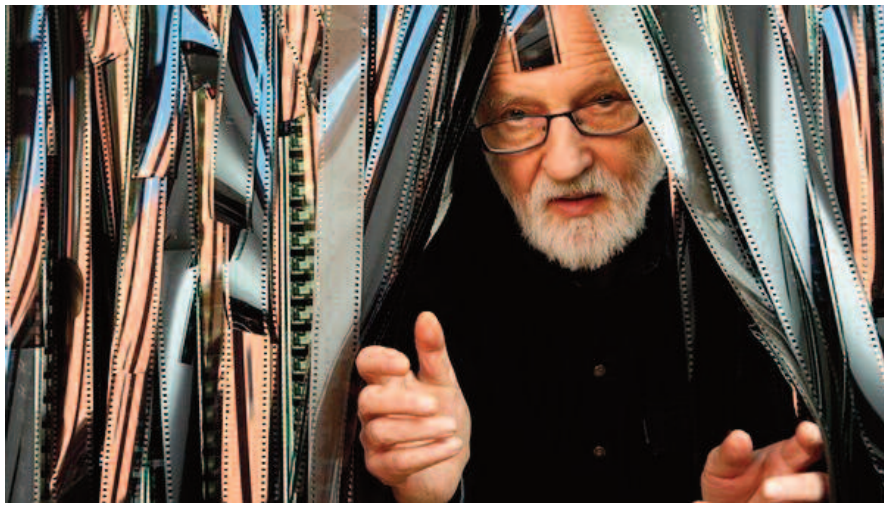
### **Ensemble Prague Moderne**

The chamber music ensemble Prague Modern features the best of the new generation of Czech interpreters. All of them are soloists in various symphony orchestras. It has been their choice and real artistic pleasure to play the music of their time, which has led them to join the Prague Modern adventure. Their high level of musicianship, originality and experimentation make this ensemble unique. Their successful staging of *Cassandra*, the "spoken" opera of Michael Jarrell, with Fanny Ardant in Prague in April 2010, is a good example.

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***Between dream and reality there only is a slight physical movement: to close or open your eyelids.***

**Jan Svankmajer - Décalogue IV**



## **Jan Svankmajer**

The film director and animation artist was born in Prague in 1934. One of the most famous and celebrated Czech filmmakers internationally, he has made six feature-length films: *Something from Alice* (1987) *Lesson Faust* (1994), *Conspirators of Pleasure* (1996), *Otesanek* (2000), *Lunacy* (2004) and *Surviving Life* (2010). In addition, he has made approximately 30 short films, some of which have become classics of the animation genre: *The Flat* (1968), *Jabberwocky* (1971), *Dimensions of Dialogue* (1982), *Darkness-Light-Darkness* (1989) and *Food* (1992)

His work has garnered many prestigious international awards, including a Czech Lion (2002), the Persistence of Vision award from the San Francisco International Film Festival (1997), the Grand Prix du Festival d'Annecy (1983) and a Golden Bear for short films at the Berlin International Film Festival (1983).

Svankmajer's obsessive and challenging work has directly influenced a diverse array of film directors, notably Tim Burton, Terry Gilliam, Peter Greenaway, John Lasseter and The Quay Brothers, to name but a few. He ranks with such pioneers as Emil Radock and Charles Bowers.

Working outside the mainstream cinema industry, Jan Svankmajer has been creating unique work for 40 years with his special style of sarcastic surrealism.

By transforming the principle of causality, magically giving life to objects according to their own reality rather than their typical utilization, and by twisting normal concepts of time and space, Svankmajer creates in his films a real "magnetic space" where the viewer loses his or her bearings, and becomes fascinated, frightened, even traumatized by the inexorable invocation of one's intimate obsessions.



## **Magnetic Fields of Jan Svankmajer**

Produced by KAIROS, cultural atelier

Sponsored by the City of Prague, the French Institute of Prague, CECOPRA a.s., NOPAL, VCES, ICHNUSA, Spoladore and Bystricky, Paul's Bohemia Trading

Premiere performance:  
11, 12 and 13 May, 2011 - Kino 35,  
French Institute in Prague

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