

## Zuzana Minacova With Her Son Matej Minac



This is a photo of me with my son, Matej Minac. It was taken in Karlovy Vary in the 2000s. My younger son, Matej, was born in 1961, graduated from the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts in Bratislava, and became a movie director. Matej makes both fictional and documentary movies. He makes movies on the subject of World War II and the Holocaust. He decided to make a movie about our family, as I was telling him various tragic stories about merry people. However, our family's tale was sad through and through, and so Matej was looking for something positive, so that the film would also contain a bit of hope. He read all sorts of books about the Holocaust, he scanned through all sorts of books in the library of the Jewish Museum in Prague, when one day he came upon the book 'Perlicky detstvi' [Pearls of Childhood] by Vera Gissingova. He was very captivated by her story, where she describes how as an 11-year-old girl she escaped the horrors of war and the certain transport towards death that Jews in a Europe gripped by Nazism were sentenced to. Thanks to Nicholas Winton's effort, 11-year-old Vera Gissingova was saved, while her parents, who remained in Czechoslovakia, were subsequently murdered in concentration camps. When my son Matej read this, he decided that he'd shoot a movie that would be based on my memories, but would also include the story of a boy who was saved thanks to Nicholas Winton's effort. In February 1998 Matej visited Winton at his home in England; Winton was very nice to him; with his typical English humor he dispassionately told him about his life, his family and grandchildren, about his interest in the opera he attended, though at that time he was almost 90. Matej was enthralled by Winton, and decided that he wouldn't make only a fictional film inspired by my life, but would also make a documentary about this remarkable man. And so came about a documentary film about Nicholas Winton, entitled 'Sila lidskosti' [The Power of Good], which among other prominent awards, was given in 2002 an international Emmy for the best non-American documentary. It is narrated by Joe Schlesinger, a Canadian reporter working for the CBS TV station, who is also one of 'Winton's children.' Matej is preparing to shoot a continuation of the film about Winton's life, and Winton is supposed to come to Prague along with his children and grandchildren. Even though he's already 97, he's in excellent physical and mental condition, and is preparing to visit an observatory with Matej, because in the year 2000 Czech astronomers named a planetoid they'd discovered in Winton's honor. In 1999 Matej made a movie entitled 'Vsichni moji blizci' ['All My Loved Ones']. The

theme was based on my childhood memories, but as the story of my childhood seemed to him to be too sad, he incorporated Winton's rescue operation into the plot. Winton, who came to Prague for the film's premiere, very much liked the picture. The movie was shown at sixty prestigious international festivals, and received a number of awards; among others, it was also submitted to the Academy Awards for the Slovak Republic in the foreign film category.