

A man in white clerical attire, including a zucchetto and a pectoral cross, is shown from the chest up. He is covering his face with his hands, suggesting a state of distress or grief. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of his clothing and the contours of his face.

The most hidden Vatican mystery

STARRING

MIKHAIL BARYSHNIKOV

THE WHITE HELICOPTER

A FILM BY ALVIS HERMANIS





LOGLINE

The film is based on true events leading up to the final day of the historical resignation of Pope Benedict XVI.

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SYNOPSIS

In February 2013, the world experienced a shock – Catholic Pope Benedict XVI resigned, making him the first Pope to do so in 600 years. Reasons for his resignation are still unknown and secretive. In light of moral and ethical upheavals within the Catholic Church, and the unique challenges of the 21st century, Ratzinger's cited reason of declining health raises more questions than gives answers. "The White Helicopter", a film starring Mikhail Baryshnikov presents a new interpretation of the final day before Pope Benedict's historic resignation.



MAIN ACTORS AND CHARACTERS

MIKHAIL BARYSHNIKOV

Born in Riga, Latvia, and living in New York City, Baryshnikov has distinguished himself as a dancer and performer in theater, television, and film. In a career spanning more than 50 years, he has worked with George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, and many other illustrious choreographers and directors. On Broadway: "Metamorphosis" (Steven Berkoff). Off-Broadway: "Beckett Shorts" (JoAnne Akalaitis). National and international tours: "Forbidden Christmas, or the Doctor and the Patient" (Rezo Gabriadze), "In Paris" (Dmitry Krymov), "Man in a Case" (Annie-B Parson and Paul Lazar), "Brodsky/Baryshnikov" (Alvis Hermanis), "The Old Woman" (Robert Wilson), "Letter to A Man" (Robert Wilson). Current projects include a film installation titled "NOT ONCE." (Jan Fabre) and the recent off-Broadway production of "The Orchard" directed by Igor Golyak.

Baryshnikov is an Academy Award and Tony Award nominee and Emmy Award recipient, the Kennedy Center Honors, and the National Medal of Arts. He was Artistic Director of American Ballet Theater (1980-89) and co-founder and dancer of White Oak Dance Project (1989-2000). He is the founder and artistic director of Baryshnikov Arts Center.

- In the film "The White Helicopter", Mikhail Baryshnikov plays Pope Benedict. Benedict XVI, original name Joseph Alois Ratzinger, (born April 16, 1927, Germany), bishop of Rome and head of the Roman Catholic Church (2005-13). Prior to his election as pope, Benedict led a distinguished career as a theologian and as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. His papacy faced several challenges, including a decline in vocations and church attendance, divisive debates concerning the direction of the church, and the effects of the scandal beginning in the late 1990s surrounding the church's handling of numerous cases of sexual abuse by priests. In 2013 he became the first pope to resign since Gregory XII in 1415.



GUNA ZARIŅA

Latvian theater and film actress. Since 1997 she has been working at the New Riga Theatre. Participated in more than 50 theater productions and more than 30 films.

Guna Zariņa has received six nominations at the Latvian National Film Award and twice received the “Best Actress” award for films “Emily. Queen of the Press” (2021) and “Normal People” (2015).

- In the film “The White Helicopter”, Guna Zariņa plays sister Tabiana. Sister Tabiana serves in the Vatican as one of memores – the nuns entrusted with simple chores. They get up at dawn, prepare breakfast, keep the premises neat and clean, and do the laundry. Memores work for free or for a symbolic fee. For them, any kind of labour is a space for recollection of Christ. Hence memores work with great responsibility, as the job done is their daily tribute to the Lord.



KASPARS ZNOTIŅŠ

Latvian theater and film actor. Since 1997 he has been working at The New Riga Theatre. Participated in more than 60 theater works and more than 18 films. Several times Kaspars Znotiņš has been nominated and received “Best Actor” award at Latvian Theater and Film Prizes. For the film “Firstborn” (2017) he was recognized as “Best Actor” at the Latvian National Film Award and received the jury nomination “Best Actor” at the Riviera International Film Festival.

- In the film “The White Helicopter”, Kaspars Znotiņš plays Georg Gänswein. Archbishop Georg Gänswein, Prefect of the Papal Household, was the personal secretary to Pope Benedict XVI and kept on working for him after the Pope’s resignation. Georg Gänswein is called a man of form and grit, as well as one of today’s most conservative servants of God.





ABOUT THE DIRECTOR ALVIS HERMANIS

Born 1965 in Riga, Latvia, Alvis Hermanis was named among the ten most influential European theatre personalities of the last decade by DU Magazine Swiss periodical for arts and culture. Mr. Hermanis has worked with major European theatre companies, including Burgtheater Vienna, Schaubühne Berlin, Münchner Kammerspiele, and Schauspielhaus Zürich; and in opera houses including Teatro alla Scala in Milan, Opéra National de Paris, Staatsoper im Schiller Theater in Berlin, Wiener Staatsoper, and La Monnaie Brussels. He has staged operas at the Salzburger Festspiele since 2012. His opera stagings include among others "Il Trovatore" featuring Plácido Domingo and Anna Netrebko (2014) and "Die Liebe der Danae" (2016) at the Salzburger Festspiele, "La Damnation de Faust" featuring Jonas Kaufman with Opéra National de Paris in 2015, "I due Foscari" and "Madama Butterfly" with Teatro alla Scala in 2016, and "Parsifal" at the Wiener Staatsoper in 2017. Mr. Hermanis's theatre productions have been presented at major theatre festivals ranging from Avignon to Edinburgh, and have toured to more than 40 countries. His many accolades include the Europe Prize New Theatre Realities, the Stanislavsky Award, two Golden Mask Awards (Moscow), Max Reinhardt Pen (Salzburger Festspiele), Nestroy Preis (Austria), and the Konrad Wolf Award (Germany). He has been artistic director of The New Riga Theatre in Latvia since 1997. In 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, Alvis Hermanis directed his first film "Agency" – a multi-series feature film, followed by "The White Helicopter" in 2022.



CAST

Jozef Ratzinger / Pope Benedict XVI MIKHAIL BARYSHNIKOV
Monsignor Georg KASPARS ZNOTIŅŠ
Sister Tabiana GUNA ZARIŅA
Sister Regina REGĪNA RAZUMA
Swiss guards JĀNIS GRŪTUPS, RITVARS LOGINS

CREDITS

Title: THE WHITE HELICOPTER

Country of production: Latvia

Year of production: 2022

Genre: drama

Length: 107 min

Specs: DCP 2K, sound 5.1, color

Language: English, some parts are in Italian with English subtitles

Director and writer ALVIS HERMANIS

Director of Photography ANDREJS RUDZĀTS

Production and costume designer KRISTĪNE JURJĀNE

Hair and Makeup Designer SARMĪTE BALODE

Editors MĀRTIŅŠ GRAUDS, KRIŠJĀNIS STOKMANIS-BLAUS

Sound designer ERNESTS ANSONS

Executive Producer JRT

Press inquiries:

INGA LIEPIŅA

mob/whatsapp: + 371 29174775; email: inga@jrt.lv

Distribution:

ELĪNA ADAMAITE

mob/whatsapp: + 371 29274868; email: elina@jrt.lv

