

Byzanfest 2020 - world's only online Orthodox Christian film festival



What is Byzanfest?

Byzanfest is the world's only online Orthodox Christian film festival streaming the very best short and feature-length films.

The Festival showcases films which reflect Orthodox Christian themes, beliefs, culture and values. All films tell visual stories which are inspired and guided by living a life in Christ.

Established in 2014, Byzanfest aims to be continuously innovative, reaching out to wider audiences, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox. The goal is to raise greater awareness of Orthodox cinema and at the same time generate a more sustainable future for the industry.

The name 'Byzanfest' is in honour of the great Byzantine Empire, a place of great wisdom, art & faith. Although it may no longer exist, the spirit and values of Byzantium shine out in the works of Orthodox Christians in the Digital Era.

The films this year cover a diverse range of topics including COVID-isolation, monasticism, bi-polar disorder, culture, war reconciliation, PTSD, climate change and genocide and come from countries all over the world including Greece, USA, France, Lebanon, Australia, Serbia, Romania, Russia, Jamaica and New Zealand.

How to watch Byzanfest

All films will be available to view on-demand – globally – from 23rd October until 8th November (Australian Eastern Standard Time) on the official Festival website: byzanfest.com.

This year's event is split into two sections: short-films and feature-lengths.

The short-film section will comprise of 14 films – all FREE to view – from [Byzanfest's YouTube channel](#).

The feature-length collection of 13 films will be available via the [Festival's Vimeo channel](#). Some will be FREE to view and others can be 'rented' for a 24-hour period.

A word from the founder, Chris Vlahonasios

"To say this year has been challenging is a massive understatement! We weren't even sure if we're going ahead with the Festival, however, we also saw it as a unique opportunity to take on the unknown, and I'm glad we did. This year, we received some of the best films the Festival has ever received and we took a gamble at opening up to features for the very first-time.

"The range and diversity of films is unbelievable. From stories about forgiveness ("The Healing") to mental illness ("All These Flowers" and "Made in America"), Byzanfest has discovered the very best in Orthodox cinema. We have stories about spiritual journey ("New Men") and the preservation of culture ("Djurdjevdan is yet to come" and "Saving North"). We have filmmakers tackling some interesting and tough topics, such as genocide ("Lethal Nationalism") and abortion ("In the Name of Choice").

“But, the film, “The Face of God”, which is also making its global première at the festival, will perhaps attract the most attention. This film examines the impact of climate change on Orthodox communities and the Orthodox understanding of how important it is we look after the planet created for us.

“However, what we are most proud of at Byzanfest is how rich and diverse Orthodox filmmaking is. Thanks to these filmmakers, many have revealed the rich cross-cultural exchange that exists within Orthodoxy. I think film is a great way to share with others the beauty that surround us, but can be blind to see. I really do hope these films will help audiences refocus how they see the world in a more spiritual way, full of love and compassion.

“It just shows how passionate these filmmakers are about telling stories that would otherwise not be told and not from an Orthodox perspective. I hope audiences will take the time to watch these films, because if filmmakers know people are watching, this gives them incentive to create more films...and an even better Byzanfest 2021!

“We’re also hosting two, free ZOOM networking sessions with the filmmakers and screenwriters enabling them to meet fellow Orthodox filmmakers and discuss ways to produce even more films. This is also open to any other Orthodox filmmakers who may be interested. We just require them to pre-book by emailing us at [\[email protected\]](#)

“I strongly encourage audiences to watch our short-film collection, because it’s from here many filmmakers test out their artistic vision. What you see in shorts is the beginning of the future of Orthodox cinema.”

About the founder

Chris Vlahonasios is an Orthodox media expert and owner of TRANSFIGURE MEDIA.

Operating since 2008, TRANSFIGURE has become the world’s biggest creative media network for Orthodox Christian filmmakers and artists. The organisation’s goals are to showcase, promote and distribute the creative works and services of Orthodox talent.

Born in Melbourne, Australia, Chris attended Melbourne Grammar School on scholarship then graduated from Victoria University completing a double-degree Bachelor of Laws (Hons) / Bachelor of Marketing (2008). While at university, Chris made several short-films, worked on the sets of many others, and established the Queen Street Film Festival from 2005-2009. In 2014, Chris founded Byzanfest

International Orthodox Film Festival which screens online and is hosted in several countries.

Chris is a member of Vatopedi Monastery's International Association of Digital Media and Orthodox Pastoral Care (DMOPC). Chris regularly speaks at Orthodox events and conferences about Orthodoxy, creativity and media. His most recent speaking engagements include the Melbourne Youth Conference and Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago Youth Workers' Summit.

His major fields of interest include digital media, intellectual property, cinema and marketing.

Byzanfest short-film prizes

Best Short-Film: sponsored by Aniston Lawyers, awarding cash prize of \$200 USD and a hand-written icon valued at \$175 USD from OramaWorld.

Best Director for Short-Film: sponsored by CityAuto Group, awarding cash prize of \$150 USD.

Best Cinematography for Short-Film: sponsored by Dormition of our Lady, Mt Gravatt, awarding cash prize of \$150 USD.

Byzanfest feature-length prizes

Best Film: sponsored by Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia Book Centre of VIC & NSW, awarding cash prize of \$200 USD and a hand-written icon valued at \$175 USD from OramaWorld.

Best Director: sponsored by Ryan Jaroncyk, awarding cash prize of \$150 USD.

Best Documentary: sponsored by Priceless Imagery, awarding cash prize of \$150 USD.

Best Editing: sponsored by Nick Papas Studios, awarding cash prize of \$150 USD.

Judging-panel for short films

Craig DiRienzo – filmmaker and winner of Byzanfest Audience Favourite 2019

Monja Jovic – screenwriter and filmmaker / Terirem Productions:
www.teriremproduction.com

Nektaria Karantzi – byzantine chanter, www.nektariakarantzi.weebly.com, Choir Director at Women in Byzantine Music Worldwide Association

Judging panel for feature-lengths

Fr. Evmenios – Archdiocesan Vicar of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia Northcote District

Joanna Briggs – author, *ICON: A Novel* and co-author of *Seven Holy Women: Conversations with Saints and Friends*

Timmy Hatzis – filmmaker, winner of Byzanfest 2019's Best Director & Best Cinematographer.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO

www.byzanfest.com

[Byzanfest YouTube Channel](#)

[Byzanfest Vimeo Channel](#)

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ONLINE ORTHODOX FILM FESTIVAL



Illustrated by Jonathan Bannan



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