



THE BLOOM OF YESTERDAY



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THE BLOOM OF YESTERDAY

TRAGICOMEDY / GERMANY - AUSTRIA / 2016 / RUNNING TIME 123' / SCREENING FORMAT DCP / SCREEN RATIO 1:2.39
ORIGINAL TITLE: DIE BLUMEN VON GESTERN

CAST

Toto Blumen	Lars Eiding
Zazie Lindeau	Adèle Haenel
Balthasar "Balti" Thomas	Jan Josef Liefers
Hannah Blumen	Hannah Herzprung

CREW

Written and directed by	Chris Kraus
Produced by	Danny Krausz, Kathrin Lemme, Chris Kraus Gerd Huber, Kurt Stocker
Director of Photography	Sonja Rom
Casting	Nina Haun, Leo Davis & Lissy Holm, Manyo- la Mutlu, Lisa Oláh, Patrick Dreikauss
Production Executive	Philip Evenkamp, Manfred Fritsch
Production Manager	Peter Hermann
Edited by	Brigitta Tauchner
Music	Annette Focks
Sound	André Zacher
Set Design	Silke Buhr
Costumes	Gioia Raspé



THE BLOOM OF YESTERDAY

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Totila Blumen (Lars Eidinger) is a Holocaust researcher. As such, he has no sense of fun. This applies in a general sense and specifically when his colleagues try to turn an Auschwitz conference into a corporate-sponsored media event. In the process, they trample all over the memory of the recently deceased Professor Norkus – whom Totila revered. On top of all this, Totila is lumped with an intern: a very young and irritating French student named Zazie (Adèle Haenel). As she follows Totila like a puppy and has a fling with his boss (Jan Josef Liefers), the otherwise serious and measured academic becomes a nervous wreck.

But it's no good moaning about it – certainly not to his stressed wife (Hannah Herzprung), who demands that he gripe less and learn to accept what his life has to offer. And so Totila ploughs on with his work, aided by the overwrought, eccentric Zazie.

She, however, appears to have an agenda of her own – and it's closely related to Totila's background and well-guarded family secret.

DIRECTORS NOTE BY CHRIS KRAUS

In the beginning, there was just a vague idea: The grandchild of a victim and the grandchild of a perpetrator talk, laugh and sleep together – and, for a very long, very fleeting moment, everything's fine. So it was hope that drove me to make this film: hope that the wounds inflicted on us by history and that continue to fester in the lives of the descendants, can be healed.

The idea of telling a story about the casualties of our German history, a story that also breaks open established patterns of remembrance, came to me in the archives of Berlin, Koblenz, Warsaw, Washington and, of course, Ludwigsburg (where the film is set). Over the course of many years, I used these archives to research my own family history. As I did so, I realized that, in many films about National Socialism, there's something missing that's important to me: the unresolved in the overly-resolved. In other words, the thing that lives on within families, the thing that's denied and self-righteous, the thing that's past and that, though preserved by official commemoration, has been swept under the rug of family memory. I'm certain that the only way to respond to this phenomenon is with irreverence.

For this reason, THE BLOOM OF YESTERDAY is a study in levity, not gloom. It's an ode to the disturbed and their disturbances, not a protest against the criminals and their crimes. It's very much a comedy – about wounds and their origins.

We live in a time in which we must use all available means to stand up to right-wing lunacy – so why not use the means of anarchistic merriment? A few years ago, a 90-year-old Holocaust survivor used them when he visited Auschwitz and Theresienstadt with his grandchildren and, with his cellphone, filmed himself performing a victory dance over the hell in which he was once to have been

exterminated. Joyfully celebrating life in all its difficulty and pain, naively hoping for reconciliation, putting the nuts in their place and creating "political beauty": Surely that's not so crazy.

I want this film to throw open windows, to flood with light and air a topic that has preoccupied me for many years, but which, even as we perform its commemoration on such a grand scale, threatens to lose its urgency – and it remains as urgent as ever. Indeed, one thing must be clear: The film might sometimes be bitterly humorous (because its characters are sometimes bitterly humorous), but it never trivializes the Holocaust. THE BLOOM OF YESTERDAY paints this crime against humanity in a fitting shade of deepest black, allowing the people to be sketched in white just as I see them: as frightened, loving, absurd, nasty, hopeful and, very, very occasionally, trusting. That's why I wanted something bright to emerge from this black-and-white scene: Because, even in its most horrific moments, life is painted in a full palette of colors.

PRODUCERS NOTE BY DANNY KRAUSZ

When I first read the screenplay, I felt like my lungs were filling with helium: I developed a weightlessness that carried me away from the superficiality and numbing tedium of social norms. What a relief!

As a film producer, I do not always have the privilege of bringing my point of view or personal attitudes to the screen. With THE BLOOM OF YESTERDAY, however, I can. One of the many reasons is my own background.

Like Germany, my home country, Austria, is struggling with questions of identity, although in a very different way. There was the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the upheaval of the interwar period, then the devastation of World War Two. The Austrian "Second Republic" emerged from a century of collapse, upheaval and devastation. When the country was just three years old, my parents – an orphaned Carinthian farmer's daughter and a returned Jewish refugee – brought me into the world. And what a world it was!

"Hitler was German, Beethoven was Austrian!" was more than just a figure of speech. People firmly wanted it to be true. They wanted to believe that Hitler had not been greeted with loud cheers of welcome when he marched into Austria in 1938; That the crowd on Vienna's Heldenplatz just happened to be there, and that, should people have made any cautious noises of encouragement, that was simply a reflection of "how things were back then". This doctrine taught me to think, and I quickly realized that, at home, things were very different. Why so? Because GRANDPA was a fallen Wehrmacht soldier and GRANDMA was a survivor of Auschwitz.

As an adolescent, I couldn't forgive my refugee father for returning to Austria. It threw up fundamental existential questions for me. I struggled with those questions despite the fact that, had he not returned, I wouldn't have existed in the first place – nor would I

THE BLOOM OF YESTERDAY

have enjoyed the good fortune of having one of the best – no, the very best – mother in the world. Like my brother's, my school report card was marked "ohne Bekenntnis": "without faith". It was a formulation I would soon condemn, considering it to be an outrageously patronizing act on the part of the school authorities. A lack of religion does not equate to a lack of faith! In any case, the sting of this label meant I soon felt a connection to, solidarity with and empathy for minorities. I still hold this fundamental conviction today. The value that my parents placed on tolerance must also have left its mark.

This trip down memory lane might explain the helium in my lungs. It might also have amplified the feelings I had when I read Chris Kraus' screenplay.

My filmography is marked by efforts to produce quality entertainment. I take my work seriously and try to address important social issues. *BLIND SPOT — HITLER'S SECRETARY* by André Heller and, more recently, *THE LAST OF THE UNJUST* by Claude Lanzmann are examples of this approach.

They are films that oscillate between guilt and innocence and explore the narrow gap between the two. Traudl Junge spent her life suffering horribly under the weight of her own past. Benjamin Murmelstein, the subject of Lanzmann's film, worked for almost seven years as Eichmann's assistant in Vienna's Jewish community. He helped some people to survive. Others, he had to sacrifice.

Despite its aspiration to be highly entertaining, *THE BLOOM OF YESTERDAY* carries forward this cinematic legacy in that it, too, is risky and controversial. The screenplay observes and portrays people from the shadows: from the darkened room between the brightly-lit halls of guilt and innocence. My impression is that people in Germany would prefer not to open the door to this room. In contrast with Austria, Germany accepted its guilt and dealt with it. But, over time, blind spots have formed. Long-term consequences. Germany has trapped itself in a state of moral paralysis that hinders its ability to make a mature, and lasting, move into the present. This is precisely where *THE BLOOM OF YESTERDAY* comes in.

I think this film is daring, noble and necessary. I believe that people like the film's main characters, Zazie and Toto, should be able to live as they see fit. They should be allowed to deal with their suffering – after all, neither is carefree – exactly as they do in this story: by repressing it or acknowledging it; treating it with playfulness, banality, silliness, egocentricity; by confronting it; with idealism and, nonetheless, an element of calculation. They are looking for love and affection and prove capable of both as they stumble through life. By helping them along the way, we are also helping ourselves. Maybe that's the greatest ambition we can have for a political film: that it lifts the weight of an inherited burden from the characters' shoulders and lays it firmly in the lap of society – where it demands true, collective resolution. And yes: This process can

begin in a cinema seat. It might sound romantic, but I am certain of it. It is clear that the healing process can no longer progress by decree, through the institutionalized and painless mechanics of atonement.

In a recent interview with weekly newspaper *DIE ZEIT*, Nobel laureate Imre Kertesz said, "First I was a prisoner at Auschwitz, then I was decorated with Germany's most prestigious civil awards. It's both funny and inexplicable." The essence of Kertesz's statement is that, while this "funny", "inexplicable" twist of fate is deeply paradoxical and brings with it a dose of bitterness, it also encompasses a life lived – and the beauty of that life. This compelling assertion lies at the heart of *THE BLOOM OF YESTERDAY*.

CREW

Director Chris Kraus

Chris Kraus, born 1963 in Göttingen, Germany, began his career as a scriptwriter and dramaturgical consultant for German directors such as Volker Schlöndorff, Detlef Buck and Rosa von Praunheim.

His cinematic debut as a director came in 2002 with the mother-and-son drama *SHATTERED GLASS*, which won a number of prizes (including two Bavarian Film Awards and multiple awards for up-and-coming filmmakers).

Kraus' second feature film, *FOUR MINUTES* (2007), explores the relationship between an elderly piano teacher and a young, highly talented female prisoner. Having won over 60 national and international awards (including the German Film Award for Best Fiction Film), it is one of the most successful German films of recent years.

Kraus's third feature, *THE POLL DIARIES* (2011), was also greeted with great acclaim by critics and audiences alike. An international co-production, the film is an epic love story set in the Baltics on the eve of World War I. It won almost 20 prizes, including four Golden Lola Awards, three Bavarian Film Awards, one Bambi Award and numerous festival accolades all over Europe.

In 2014, the Hof International Film Festival honored Chris Kraus with a lifetime achievement award. In January, 2017, his new film, *THE BLOOM OF YESTERDAY*, will celebrate its German theatrical release.

Filmography:

2010: *THE POLL DIARIES*

2008: *BELLA BLOCK - REISE NACH CHINA* (TV)

2007: *FOUR MINUTES*

2004: *C(R)OOK* (screenplay; director: P. Danquart)

2001: *SHATTERED GLASS*

1999: *THE EINSTEIN OF SEX* (screenplay; director: R. v. Praunheim)

THE BLOOM OF YESTERDAY

CAST

Lars Eidinger (Toto Blumen)

Alongside his successful stage career, Lars Eidinger's breakthrough as a film actor came in 2009 when he appeared in the prizewinning drama EVERYONE ELSE (dir. M. Ade). Since then, on the stage, on TV and on film, the multi-award-winning character actor has continued to give his roles depth and substance, particularly when they concern ambivalent, internally conflicted characters. Eidinger garnered international attention at the Cannes Film Festival in 2014 for his appearance alongside Juliette Binoche in CLOUDS OF SILS MARIA and in 2016 opposite Kristen Stewart in PERSONAL SHOPPER (both dir. O. Assayas). He currently has a starring role in Tom Tykwer's BABYLON BERLIN.

Adèle Haenel (Zazie Lindeau)

In the space of eight years, Adèle Haenel received four César nominations. In 2014 and 2015, this French rising star won a César two years running for SUZANNE and LOVE AT FIRST FIGHT. She had her big break aged just 18 with her debut film, WATER LILLIES (dir. C. Sciamma). In 2014, thanks to LOVE AT FIRST FIGHT and IN THE NAME OF MY DAUGHTER, the Cannes Film Festival marked Haenel's definitive initiation as a French movie star. In 2016, she rose to international prominence for her starring role in the Dardenne brother drama THE UNKNOWN GIRL.

Jan Josef Liefers (Balthasar "Balti" Thomas)

"Jan Josef Liefers is regarded as one of Germany's best-known and best-loved actors" (Münchener Abendzeitung). It's an apt description for an actor who began his successful career alongside Til Schweiger in KNOCKIN' ON HEAVENS DOOR (1997). Since 2002, Liefers has appeared twice a year as Professor Boerne in the Münster edition of TATORT ("Crime Scene"), and the show has so far broken numerous viewing figure records. Liefers has won almost every prestigious German film and television prize. He is also a successful musician, TV host, producer and director.

Hannah Herzsprung (Hannah Blumen)

For her debut leading film role – as murderer Jenny in Chris Kraus' 4 MINUTES (2005) – Hannah Herzsprung won numerous international acting awards. Her subsequent lead roles in a number of box office hits including THE BAADER MEINHOF COMPLEX, THE READER and the 2011 post-apocalyptic thriller HELL confirmed her status as a star of German cinema. Most recently, Herzsprung appeared in Dominik Graf's BELOVED SISTERS, Germany's 2015 Oscar entry in the category of Best Foreign Language Film.

PRODUCTION COMPANY DOR FILM

Over the years, DOR Film has expanded its often high-risk feature film production to include television production, and the two now have equal importance within the company. The team's continuous efforts to establish and maintain a network of global contacts have

been rewarded: Several successful co-productions have brought DOR Film success on an international level.

DOR Film now consists of a 20-member team whose members have, for many years, pursued a common goal: to fully support our creative partners not only during production, but also in the development of projects and the placement and management of films at international festivals. DOR Film Produktionsgesellschaft m.b.H. was established in 1988 by Milan Dor and Danny Krausz with the aim of creating an innovative production facility for young Austrian directors. Our strength comes from our dedicated team and the trust we have built up with filmmakers. The success of our projects and their positive reception by cinema audiences confirm that we are on the right path and assure us that we will continue to contribute to international film events in the years to come.

WORLD SALES BETA CINEMA

World sales and co-financing company Beta Cinema has established itself as a "boutique-operation" for quality feature films that combine commercial viability with artistic integrity. Prime examples are Oscar winners and worldwide B.O. hits like THE LIVES OF OTHERS, IL DIVO, MONGOL and DOWNFALL.

Current highlights include the Emma Watson, Daniel Brühl, Michael Nyqvist thriller COLONIA, Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner SAND STORM and 6 times German Film Award winner THE PEOPLE VS. FRITZ BAUER.

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