



FILM MOVEMENT®

presents

HEIDI

Directed by Alain Gsponer

“The classically fashioned feel-good feature...” – Boyd van Hoeij, *The Hollywood Reporter*



Germany, Switzerland / 2015 / Comedy, Children's / German, Swiss with English Subtitles; English Dub
111 min / 2.40:1 / 5.1 and 2.0

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Assets:

Official US Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSTBOSv71aQ>

Downloadable hi-res images:

<http://www.filmmovement.com/filmcatalog/index.asp?MerchandiseID=534>

SYNOPSIS

Orphan girl Heidi spends the happiest days of her childhood with her eccentric grandfather, cut off from the outside world in a simple cabin in the Swiss mountains. Together with her friend Peter, she tends to grandfather's goats and enjoys freedom in the mountains to the fullest. But these carefree times come to an abrupt end when Heidi is taken to Frankfurt by her Aunt Dete. The idea is for her to stay with the wealthy Sesemann family and be a playmate for his wheelchair-bound daughter Klara, under the supervision of the strict nanny, Fräulein Rottenmeier. Although the two girls soon become friends and Klara's grandmother awakes a passion for books in Heidi while teaching her to read and write, Heidi's longing for her beloved mountains and her grandfather grows ever stronger.

LOGLINE

Young orphan girl Heidi lives in the Swiss Alps with her goat-herding grandfather. Forced to move into the home of an upper-class Frankfurt family, the energetic child struggles to fit in, longing for the simplicity of her life in the mountains.

SELECTED PRESS QUOTES

"A handsomely crafted...retelling of the titular Swiss orphan girl's unusual childhood, director Alain Gsponer's German-language adaptation of *Heidi* gently reminds the viewers what an absorbing tale full of well-defined characters can do..."

– Edmund Lee, South China Morning Post

"...a condensed mixture of fresh air and human relationships. It does the landscape justice and the humorous bits that punctuate the film are intelligent. As for the young Anuk Steffen, who makes her cinematic debut, her performance is full of life, compassion and joy." – Hela Khamarou, Cineman

ABOUT "HEIDI"

HEIDI is based on the beloved and best-selling children's book published in 1881 by Swiss author Johanna Spyri. The two-volume novel, written "for children and those who love children," which was the book's subtitle, is one of the best-known works of Swiss literature and has been translated into over 50 languages from the original German and has sold over 50 million copies around the world. Originally published in two parts as "Heidi: Her Years of Wandering and Learning" and "Heidi: How She Used What She Learned," the story has been adapted over the years through theater; television programs, including one by the BBC and one by Walt Disney; films, including a silent one and one starring Shirley Temple; a musical play co-written by Neil Simon; a video piece with Paul McCartney and Mike Kelley; a talking dog version with Angela Lansbury; a Japanese anime; and an animated film by Hanna-Barbera. There is even a "Heidiland" in eastern Switzerland.

CREDITS

CAST

Heidi	Anuk Steffen
Almöhi	Bruno Ganz
Klara Sesemann	Isabelle Ottmann
Peter the Goatherd	Quirin Agrippi
Fräulein Rottenmeier	Katharina Schüttler
Grandma Sesemann	Hannelore Hoger
Mr. Sesemann	Maxim Mehmet
Sebastian	Peter Lohmeyer
Dete	Anna Schinz
Tinette	Jella Haase

CREW

Directed by	Alain Gsponer
Screenplay	Petra Volpe
Producers	Reto Schaerli
	Lukas Hobi
	Uli Putz
	Jakob Claussen
Casting	Corinna Glaus
	Daniela Tolkien
Music by	Niki Reiser
Cinematography by	Matthias Fleischer
Edited by	Michael Schaerer
Production design by	Christian M. Goldbeck
Costume design by	Anke Winckler
Hair & Makeup	Georg Korpás
	Juliane Hübner

BIOGRAPHY – Director Alain Gsponer

Zurich-born Alain Gsponer studied at the renowned Baden-Württemberg Film Academy in Ludwigsburg. He completed his Scenic Film studies in 2002, with the medium-length film *KIKI AND TIGER* – winner of the Audience Award at the Max Ophüls Festival, and shown around the world. Gsponer's feature-length debut was *ROSE* (2005), a captivating tribute to a single mother starring Corinna Harfouch. The film won the German Television Award in the Best Film category in 2007 and was awarded the Eastman Advancement Award at the Hof International Film Festival.



Following *ROSE*, Gsponer directed TV programs as well as films such as tragicomedy *DAS WAHRE LEBEN* (2006) and two adaptations of books by best-selling author Martin Sute. These include the satire *LILA, LILA* (2009), starring Daniel Brühl and Henry Hübchen; and the TV production *DER LETZTE WEYNFELDT* (2010), which won the Swiss Television Award in the Best Film category.

Gsponer first worked with the HEIDI producers when he directed the live-action film adaptation of the classic children's book *DAS KLEINE GESPENST* (2013). This Otfried Preußler adaptation drew about a million people to German cinemas. Alain Gsponer is currently working on an adaptation of Ödön von Horváth's *JUGEND OHNE GOTT*.

DIRECTOR'S INTERVIEW: "WITH ALL MY HEART" with screenwriter Petra Volpe

What did you discover in the novels?

I found a story and a Heidi character that I had not seen before. Johanna Spyri writes incredibly vividly, has a hard realism and describes the story three-dimensionally and ambivalently. With her it is not this good world versus bad world that has been shown so often in the films. And I thought: Wow, now that would be a great challenge to make a Heidi film that could do justice to this three-dimensionality, this complexity, this delicacy and precision of the characters and the world. I imagined a film that would pick up on this delicate and intimate aspect that the novel contains yet would not neglect this epic greatness when it came to emotions. Furthermore, I also felt a very personal connection to this material, to the character, when I worked my way into it.

I have read a lot about Johanna Spyri and the more I read, the more this woman fascinated me too – and I felt a connection, as a person and as a woman. Heidi is also a very powerful girls' story. So I said: "Ok, I'll write it. I want to, and I can."

What, in your words, is the quintessence of this world-famous story?

I once read that Heidi opens the hearts of people right where goodness is located. I think the story contains a longing we all have: a child that is so pure, a child that can just be itself. That was a very important aspect for me when writing the screenplay. The contrasts are also incredibly powerful. On the one hand we have this small, tender girl in her little shirt and on the other hand the old, grumpy Almöhi. Then we have a house in Germany that is like a corset into which the girl, who has come from the mountains and was so free, is forced. These massive contrasts in the story are something universal, which is why people still like reading the story to this day. And I would like to stress once again that for all these big contrasts there is no black and white, no good versus evil, not even with Johanna Spyri. There is always a "but" or another side. That is one great strength of the story.

Is there an aspect you have changed in the screenplay?

Heidi does not undergo a development in Spyri's book, which is also down to the time it was written. Heidi is a very crystalline character; the novel is not a development novel. And criticism of the novel was also aimed at Heidi being condemned to be a child for ever, asexual, forever serving her grandfather... I just think that the times did not permit Johanna Spyri to liberate Heidi. But we live in different times today, in which it is possible for me to give Heidi a prospect, a vision of her future – thereby "liberating" her. But without any major development, because that would not work for the story as a whole.

How did you approach the adaptation?

There are certain elements in the story that cannot be left out. For example, Klara learning to walk, Peter pushing the wheelchair down the mountain, Heidi hiding the rolls in the cupboard in Frankfurt. For this reason I also took different approaches to the adaptation. You have to be very humble with the material, which is very strict. You cannot just invent things to add to it because you want to make it more modern, exciting or interesting. If you do that, it just won't work any more. It falls apart. You have to surrender to this strictness, look, listen and stay very close. If you skip around vainly and invent extra things, they will not fit.



Why do we need another HEIDI adaptation in your opinion?

The story is of great relevance. Particularly the idea that creating art, expressing oneself, communicating is more important than any belief systems. In my view it is important to encourage children to communicate with the world, to seek a language. That makes children strong and free. I also think that we live in a strangely hostile world today. Although there is an obsession with bodies, there is also a hostility to the wild, to being outside in the great outdoors. That is one of the best things for children.

Last year I was with my husband's children, who are growing up in Brooklyn and are real city kids, and spent a day on an Alp in Switzerland as part of a tour of Europe. They still talk about it today because it was the ultimate deep experience for them. I think

HEIDI takes you away to this world and also makes adults feel like going out more with their children where they can bustle about, feel free and discover things. Heidi hangs around in the meadow all day long with her friend Peter. There is nobody there who has to entertain them. They have their goats and are outside. There is no structure. Today, parents constantly have to occupy their children. Kids no longer have any idea of how to overcome boredom. They are given something to do immediately.

What was important for you when developing the characters?

I thought all the characters were ambivalent. They are not divided up into exclusively good and exclusively evil. The grandfather, for instance, has a dark side that you also get to feel. Or Klara's father, who is a very ambivalent character, and the grandmother, who is not beyond reproach, who comes and goes again although the child is alone. In general it was important to me to retain these characteristics, which were created by Spyri. It was not possible to immerse myself in the psychology of the characters – there is not enough time to do this in a film. But I still tried to incorporate different tones. It was extremely important for me that the story is very close to Heidi, that it is told completely from the girl's perspective.

AWARDS

WINNER:

Film Award in Gold for Outstanding Children or Youth Film – German Film Awards

Nominated

German Film Awards – Gold for Best Costume Design

Swiss Film Prize for Best Actor (Bruno Ganz); Best Music (Niki Reiser); and Best Editing (Mike Scherer)



SELECTED FILM FESTIVALS

2016 Chicago International Children's Film Festival

2016 St. Louis International Film Festival

2016 3 Rivers Film Festival

2017 Children's Film Festival

About Film Movement

Celebrating its 15th year in 2017, Film Movement is a North American distributor of award-winning independent and foreign films based in New York City. Film Movement has released more than 250 feature films and shorts culled from prestigious film festivals worldwide, and last year it had its first Academy Award-nominated film, THEEB. Film Movement's theatrical distribution strategy has evolved to include promising American independent films, documentaries, and an even stronger slate of foreign art house titles. In 2015, Film Movement launched its reissue label Film Movement Classics, featuring new restorations released theatrically as well as on Blu-ray and DVD, including films by such noted directors as Eric Rohmer, Peter Greenaway, Bille August, Marleen Gorris, Takeshi Kitano and Ettore Scola. For more information, please visit www.filmmovement.com.