

Nina Hoss

Ruth Waldburger
presents

Lars Eidinger



My Little Sister

A film by Stéphanie Chuat and Véronique Reymond

99 minutes · DCP · 1:1:85 · Color · Digital 5.1 Mix · Switzerland · 2020

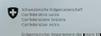


My Little Sister

A film by Stéphanie Chuat and Véronique Reymond

WITH NINA HOSS · LARS EIDINGER · MARTHE KELLER · JENS ALBINUS · THOMAS OSTERMEIER

BETA CINEMA PRESENTS SCHWESTERLEIN WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY STÉPHANIE CHUAT AND VÉRONIQUE REYMOND DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY FILIP ZUMBRUNN
SOUND PATRICK STORCK · GINA KELLER · JACQUES KIEFFER EDITED BY MYRIAM RACHMUTH MUSIC CHRISTIAN GARCIA-GAUCHER PRODUCTION DESIGN MARIE-CLAUDE LANG BRENGUIER
COSTUME DESIGN ANNA VAN BRÉE MAKE-UP MARC HOLLENSTEIN · BARBARA GRUNDMANN ASSISTANT DIRECTORS JÉRÔME DASSIER PRODUCTION MANAGER JEAN-MARIE GINDRAUX
A SWISS PRODUCTION BY VEGA FILM IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH RTS · SRG/SSR · ARTE G.E.I.E. SUPPORTED BY BUNDESAMT FÜR KULTUR (BAK) · CINÉFORUM WITH THE SUPPORT OF LOTERIE ROMANDE
ZÜRCHER FILMSTIFTUNG · MEDIA DESK SUISSE · KULTURFONDS SSA · EQUINOXE EUROPE · CREATIVE EUROPE MEDIA · EUROPÄISCHE UNION · SUISSIMAGE
STAGE POOL FOCAL / ERNST GÖHNER STIFTUNG PRODUCED BY RUTH WALDBURGER





Synopsis

Brilliant playwright, Lisa no longer writes. She lives in Switzerland with her family but her heart has stayed in Berlin, beating to the rhythm of her brother's heart. The ties between the twins have grown stronger since Sven was diagnosed with an aggressive type of leukemia. He's a famous theatre actor and Lisa refuses to accept his fate, moving heaven and earth to get him back on stage. She gives her all for her soul mate, neglecting everything else, even risking her marriage. Her relationship with her husband starts to fall apart, but Lisa only has eyes for her brother, her mirror, who connects her back with her deepest aspirations and rekindles her desire to create, to feel alive...

Directors' note

Schwesterlein has a special meaning for us. This film brings together three elements that are central to our lives. First, the city of Berlin to which we've had a strong attachment for over fifteen years. Second, the theatre, as we are both actresses. And above all, a unique friendship that goes back to our childhood. Stéphanie and Véronique were first and foremost two teenagers who shared the same love of theatre and decided to make a career out of it. Together we created a multitude of shows and together we started making films.

To write *Schwesterlein*, we drew inspiration from our own atypical relationship, wherein we sometimes feel more alive when we are creating than in everyday life, like the twins in our movie, always hooked up to their shared imaginary world when they are together. We made them part of a theatre family because

we are fascinated by the passion that drives those known in Germany as "Theatermenschen". In this community, an actor who doesn't perform doesn't exist. He is erased from memory. Whilst on stage he glows, borne by the presence of the audience. Through our characters' love of the theatre, our movie recounts in its own way the necessity of dreams as a way of escaping reality.

Schwesterlein is also the story of Lisa's inner journey back to her creativity through the illness of her brother, her alter ego. By reconnecting with writing to beat back the shadows, she brings herself out of the darkness. Through the unbreakable bonds that link these two beings, our film celebrates the fragility and power of life, the strength of transmission, and relates that the end of one life can also be the beginning of another.



Interview with the filmmakers

WHERE DID YOU GET THE IDEA FOR THIS FILM SET BETWEEN SWITZERLAND AND BERLIN?

Véronique Reymond: We wanted to open new perspectives, work with non French-speaking actors. This wish came together with the desire to tell the story of a woman going through a midlife crisis, torn between the world of boarding schools in Switzerland and the theatre milieu in Berlin, between her family life and her own creativity.

Stéphanie Chuat: We were inspired by Nina Hoss. We were blown away by her performance in the movie *Barbara* by Christian Petzold. And fate took a hand. In February 2015, we bumped into her by chance in a boutique in Berlin. We went over to her and said: "Hello, we're Swiss filmmakers and we're writing a script for you. Would you have time for a coffee?" Three days later, she called us back and met us at a cafe on Potsdamer Platz for a "quick coffee" that ended up lasting three hours. It was an incredible piece of luck meeting her this way and that she remained faithful to the project, which took us four years until we could finally shoot it.

VR: As we chatted with Nina Hoss, we found a real connection with theatre and more specifically the Schaubühne in Berlin. Like Lars Eidinger, she was a member of the Schaubühne Company and both had played under the direction of Thomas Ostermeier. We'd known him since he was still a student, working on a show in Geneva.

SO THIS FILM WAS FUELLED BY ITS ACTORS, BRINGING IT DOCUMENTARY OVERTONES...

VR: Lars Eidinger played and still plays Hamlet with Thomas Ostermeier's company. He has a very strong relationship with the stage. We couldn't imagine another actor acting the part of the twin brother. We enjoyed so much filming at the Schaubühne, it was beautiful to see this theatrical family, the way they behaved with each other, the way they talked to each other, sharing the same passion.

SC: We were lucky enough to have Thomas open the doors of the Schaubühne to us and accept to play the role of David. We have a theatre background and this openness means a lot to us.

VR: We had lengthy discussions with him about his lines because Thomas Ostermeier won't say just anything in a film, especially where he's playing a stage director, his own role. When he said he would never have a dying actor perform on stage in front of an audience, we changed the script to respect that.

IS BLOOD TIES THE REAL SUBJECT OF SCHWESTERLEIN?

VR: Yes, the relationship between this brother and sister is the heart and soul of *Schwesterlein*. Lisa and Sven are constantly connected. The film's challenge was to portray this invisible, indescribable bond.

SC: The movie is pretty much tied to our own experience, because it's also creation that connects both of us. Before writing and directing films, we put on a multitude of shows together. Creativity is part of our daily lives. For example, we like to imagine the lives of people we cross on the street... We incorporated that in the script, where Lisa and Sven "looked at the world through two pairs of eyes", but later we dropped these scenes during the editing process. The closeness between them was so obvious that there was no need to emphasize it further.

IN SCHWESTERLEIN WE ALSO FIND OURSELVES DEALING WITH SICKNESS AND DEATH...

VR: To test their bond, we wanted our twins to have to deal with separation. And only death can put an end to such a strong relationship. When he gets sick, she realizes that she might lose her connection to theatre that she'd kept alive through him. Lisa starts writing again in order to offer Sven one last role. But subconsciously, she does it as much for herself as for him. That way, she gets back in touch with herself, with her creativity. As the brother fades away, the sister comes to light. He dies and she's reborn.

SC: Here again, there are elements drawn in from our personal lives. In May 2015, I found out that my mother had cancer. I looked after her for ten months, until

her passing. Like me with my mother, Lisa took on the role of family caregiver. Véronique lost her father around the same time. Experiencing these losses would influence a lot our writing.

YOUR FILMS OFTEN HAVE FEMINIST TONES, WITHOUT THEM BEING FLAUNTED OR IMPOSING...

SC: Our documentary *Les Dames* gives a forum to women over 65 who feel invisible to the rest of society. In our drama *La Petite Chambre*, Rose is shattered because she's mourning the loss of her stillborn child. These women do not spontaneously have a militant commitment. Their struggle is a part of their lives in a subtle way. So we'll follow their inner paths to exist, whether for themselves or toward the world. We are interested in a sort of gentle assertion, more visible in their acts than in their words.

VR: We like to investigate the theme of feminism by looking at intimate relationships between men and women. In *Schwesterlein*, Lisa at first seems a little self-effacing, mostly focussing on her brother and her family. Her inner strength is growing as the film progresses, through the ordeals she has to face. But initially, she is the wife of a successful man and has given up on her career to look after their children. Lots of women have excellent credentials but decide to put their career aspirations aside to allow their partners to thrive professionally. This is particularly true with expats, where the spouse follows her husband and looks after the children whilst waiting for her turn to come. But when the time comes for her husband to return the favour, things fall flat! Family obligations lead women to make choices of which they are still too often prisoners.

THIS FILM, WHICH IS ABOUT CREATION, SOUNDS LIKE A PROFESSION OF FAITH, A DECLARATION OF LOVE AT THE THEATRE – RIGHT DOWN TO THE ROMANTIC DESIRE TO DIE ON STAGE...

SC: Many actors dream of dying on stage. Michel Bouquet told us so during the shooting of *La Petite Chambre*: “An actor is only alive when he’s performing.” His acting delays death. On a wider scale, art influences our relationship with the world and makes us more aware, more awake. It helps us to deal with reality by giving us some hope.

VR: The invented worlds we create for our characters sometimes seem to us more real than our daily lives. Artists share this strange and delightful feeling of sometimes being disconnected from the real world.

AS IN *LA PETITE CHAMBRE* OR *LES DAMES*, THE SUBJECT IS SERIOUS BUT THE CINEMATOGRAPHY IS BRIGHT AND THE CAMERA VERY MOBILE. IS THERE A FORM OF AESTHETICS THAT ESTABLISHES YOUR VISION?

SC: We wanted images in motion, because motion is life. There’s a tension, a beat that brings life to the film. We use a lot of one-shot scenes that allow the actors’ performance to shine through. Working on the focus is also essential when you decide to shoot with a shoulder-mounted camera, it guides the viewer’s vision throughout the scene.

VR: The way the film is shot echoes the characters’ inner restlessness. There is something that vibrates underneath this apparently ordinary daily life, something that pulsates in their blood.

AS ACTRESSES, SCREENWRITERS AND DIRECTORS, HOW DO YOU STAGE ACTORS?

SC: Due to their very busy agendas, we only had one day with Nina and Lars together before the shooting. We went through all their scenes and dialogues. After their read-through, we carried out minor adjustments so that they could make the text their own. But let’s be clear, this short rehearsal time went so well because we had talked at length with them about their characters throughout the whole writing process.

VR: Before shooting, we both first play the scenes first on the set, to define the positions of the camera according to the stakes of the scene. We propose then a kind of choreography to the actors and it’s up to them to make it their own, to adjust it, integrate it. Simultaneously, we define the emotional scope of the scene, because movement and motivation are always connected. With great actors such as Nina Hoss, Lars Eidinger, Marthe Keller and Jens Albinus, the text is already interiorized and you can quickly deal with the fine-tuning of inexpressible, non-verbal moves. It’s a great joy for us to be able to work with such fine actors.

Interview by Mathieu Loewer



Stéphanie Chuat and Véronique Reymond

Bio- / Filmography

Stéphanie Chuat and Véronique Reymond have known each other since their childhood. Both passionate about theatre, they are accomplished actresses and have performed in numerous Swiss and French theatrical productions. They have created many shows as a stage duo as well, and their first step towards cinema was by including video in their plays. This led them to write and direct four short films. One of them, *Berlin Backstage*, shot in the prestigious Berliner Philharmonie, won a Berlin Today Award (Berlinale 2004).

The duo moved on to write and direct their first feature film, *The Little Bedroom*, starring legendary French actor Michel Bouquet. Premiered at the Locarno Film Festival 2010, the film was selected to represent Switzerland at the Academy Awards, was honoured with two Quartz at the Swiss Film Award (Best Fiction Film and Best Screenplay) and received multiple awards in international festivals.

Stéphanie Chuat and Véronique Reymond have explored the documentary field by directing *Evening Class for Adults* (2005) and *Buffo, Buten & Howard* (2009). They also wrote and directed *Open Book*, a series broadcast in 2014 on Swiss and French Television. This successful experience led them to write a new series, *Toxic*, currently under development.

In 2018, the duo of Swiss filmmakers joined forces again to direct *Ladies*, a documentary premiered at Visions du Réel Film Festival and selected by a number of festivals. It was nominated for the Swiss Film Award in the Best Documentary category and has been a box office success in Swiss cinemas.

www.chuat-reymond.com

Nina Hoss

Bio- / Filmography

Born in 1975 in Stuttgart, Nina Hoss studied at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in Berlin. She then became a member of the Deutsches Theater until 2013. In 2014, she joined the Schaubühne Theatre in Berlin where she's acted under the direction of Thomas Ostermeier in several plays, among them *Bella Figura* by Yasmina Reza, *The Little Foxes* by Lillian Hellman and in 2017 *Returning to Reims*, a monologue by Didier Eribon.

Nina Hoss has been best known in recent years for her outstanding roles in movies and series. In 2007, she received the Silver Bear at the Berlinale for her performance in *Yella* by director Christian Petzold. Since then, they collaborated in several films: *Jerichow* (2009), *Barbara* (Silver Bear, Berlinale 2012) and *Phoenix* (2014). Nina Hoss also played under the direction of Anton Corbijn

(*A Most Wanted Man*, 2014), Volker Schlöndorff (*Return to Montauk*, 2017), Katrin Gebbe (*Pelican Blood*, 2019) and Ina Weisse in *The Audition* (2019). For her performance in that movie, she received the Silver Shell for Best Actress at the San Sebastian Film Festival 2019. Nina Hoss has also been playing the recurring role of Astrid in the American series *Homeland*. She just finished shooting the series *Shadowplay*, together with Michael C. Hall.

Nina Hoss has received many awards, among them the Adolf-Grimme Prize (2003 and 2005), the Bavarian Television Prize (2005) and the Deutsche Filmpreis (2008). In 2019, she was honoured with the Douglas-Sirk Award, given to a personality who has made outstanding achievements within culture and the film industry.



Lars Eideringer

Bio- / Filmography

Lars Eideringer was born in Berlin in 1976. He studied drama at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in Berlin, in the same class as Nina Hoss. Since 1999, he has been a member of the Schaubühne Theatre in Berlin and plays most of the leading roles in many Thomas Ostermeier productions: *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Demons...* Lars Eideringer is also a renowned DJ in Berlin with his *Autistic Disco* performances that he regularly gives at the Schaubühne.

Since 2005, Lars Eideringer has acted in many movies, among them: *Everyone Else* by Maren Ade (Silver Bear at the Berlinale 2009), *Home for the Weekend* by Hans-Christian Schmid (2011), *Goltzius and The Pelican Company* by Peter Greenaway (2012), *Clouds of Sils Maria* by Olivier Assayas (2014), *Sworn Virgin* by Laura Bispuri (2015), *Personal Shopper* by Olivier Assayas (2016), *The Bloom*

of Yesterday by Chris Kraus (2016), *25 km/h* by Markus Goller (2018), *High Life* by Claire Denis (2018), *Proxima* by Alice Winocour (2019). He also plays in the successful series *Babylon Berlin* created by Tom Tykwer, Henk Handloegten and Achim von Borries.

Lars Eideringer has received numerous awards for his performances in theatre and cinema. In 2013, he was awarded Best Actor by the German Film Critics Society for his roles in *Tabu* and *Everyone Else*. In 2014, he received the Grimme Prize for the TV movie *Border Walk*. In 2016, he was awarded the Best Actor Award for his role as Hamlet at the Teheran Fajr Theatre Festival. In 2018, he received the Ernst Lubitsch Award for his performance in *25 km/h*.

Marthe Keller

Bio- / Filmography

Marthe Keller started her acting career at the Schiller Theater in Berlin. She was then revealed in France in the 1970s with the cult series *La Demoiselle d'Avignon* and Philippe De Broca's movies. Following that, she appeared in numerous films with Christopher Franck, Claude Lelouch, Benoît Jacquot, Nikita Mikhalkov... In theatre, she played under the direction of Sami Frey, Patrice Chéreau, Jorge Lavelli.

In the United States, she acted in movies directed by Billy Wilder, John Schlesinger, Clint Eastwood, Sydney Pollack, John Frankenheimer, and her partners have been Al Pacino in *Bobby Deerfield*, Dustin Hoffman in *Marathon Man* and Marlon Brando in *Formula*. In 2002, she was nominated for a Tony Award for

her role in *Judgment at Nuremberg* on Broadway. Also an opera director, she created Francis Poulenc's *Le Dialogue des Carmélites* at the Opéra National du Rhin in Strasbourg in 1999, and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York in 2005.

Recently, she has appeared in *After Love* by Joachim Lafosse, *In a Rush* by Louis-Do de Lencquesaing, *The Mark of the Angels* with Gérard Depardieu and Joey Starr, *Breath of Life* by David Roux and *The Romanoffs*, a series created by Mathew Weiner. In January 2012, she was named Knight of the Legion of Honour in France.

She has also played in several Swiss films, including *Fragile* by Laurent Nègre, for which she won the 2006 Swiss Film Prize (Best Performance in a supporting role). In 2015, she played the lead role in *Amnesia* by Barbet Schroeder, produced by Vega Film. She recently played alongside Bruno Ganz in *The Witness* by Mitko Panov, *The Holy Family* by Louis-Do de Lencquesaing and *The Staggering Girl* by Luca Guadagnino.

Jens Albinus

Bio- / Filmography

Jens Albinus was born in 1954. As an actor, dramatist and director, he's one of the most independent-minded and uncompromising names in Danish theatre. He trained at the Århus Theatre, where he was employed until 1995 and played many major roles, ranging from Henrik Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* to Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*. As an actor, he has later worked with several of the Danish leading theatres, and also performed on several occasions in German theatres, including the Volksbühne in Berlin.

He had his breakthrough with cinema audiences as the cult leader 'Stoffer' in Lars von Trier's controversial Dogma film *The Idiots* (1998). Lars von Trier also directed him in *Dancer in the Dark*, *Nymphomaniac*, *Dogville*, and *The Boss*

of it All. Jens Albinus also played among others in *In your Hands* by Annette K. Olsen (2004), *This is Love* by Matthias Glasner (2009), *Silent Heart* by Bille August (2014) and *The Audition* by Ina Weisse (2019).

From 2003 to 2006, Jens Albinus played the leading role in the crime series *The Eagle*, which made him known to German audiences. He also acted in the famous series *Deutschland, 83* (2015).

Jens Albinus has received the Lauritzen Prize, the Inge Dam Grant and the Herman Bang Travel Grant, and in 2003 both 'Bodil' and 'Robert' film awards for *Facing the Truth* by Nils Malmros.

A close-up portrait of Thomas Ostermeier, a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair and a slight beard. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. He is wearing a dark jacket or scarf. The background is blurred, showing other people in a crowd.

Thomas Ostermeier

Bio- / Filmography

Born in 1968 in Soltau, Thomas Ostermeier trained as a director at the Ernst Busch School of Theatre in Berlin. From 1996 to 1999, he was the artistic director of the Baracke at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. Since September 1999, he has been the artistic director of the Schaubühne Theatre in Berlin. In 2000, Thomas Ostermeier was awarded with the “European Prize New Theatrical Realities”. In 2004, he was appointed Associate Artist at the Avignon Theatre Festival, France. In 2009, he was named Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters by the French Ministry of Culture. Then in 2015, he became a “Commander”. In 2011, he received the Golden Lion Award from the Venice Biennale for his entire career.

Recent Schaubühne productions include *An Enemy of the People* by Henrik Ibsen (2012), *Death in Venice* by Thomas Mann/Gustav Mahler (2013), *The Little Foxes* by Lillian Hellman (2014), *Richard III* by Shakespeare (2015) and *Bella Figura* by Yasmina Reza (2015). In 2016, Thomas Ostermeier staged *Professor Bernhardt* by Arthur Schnitzler and in 2017, he created Didier Eribon’s *Returning to Reims*, a monologue starring Nina Hoss. In 2018, he directed *History of Violence* by Edouard Louis and two Ödon von Horvath plays in 2018 and 2019: *Italian Night* and *Youth without God*. His productions are performed all over the world. Thomas Ostermeier has acted in a few plays and in *Matilda* by Aleksey Uchitel, released in 2017.



Cast

Lisa
Nina Hoss

Sven
Lars Eidinger

Kathy
Marthe Keller

Martin
Jens Albinus

David
Thomas Ostermeier

Linne-Lu
Linne-Lu Lungershausen

Noah
Noah Tschärland

Crew

Written and Directed by
Stéphanie Chuat
and Véronique Reymond

Director of Photography
Filip Zimbrunn

Sound
Patrick Storck
Gina Keller
Jacques Kieffer

Edited by
Myriam Rachmuth

Production Design
Marie-Claude Lang Brenguier

Costume Design
Anna Van Brée

Make-Up
Marc Hollenstein
Barbara Grundmann

Music
Christian Garcia-Gaucher

Assistant Directors
Jérôme Dassier

Production Manager
Jean-Marie Gindraux

Production
Ruth Waldburger / Vega Film



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