



**Presents**



# **A HEAVY HEART**

**A film by Thomas Stuber**

Original title: Herbert | Germany 2015 | Length: 109 minutes

Starring

Peter Kurth, Lina Wendel, Lena Lauzemis, Edin Hasanovic,  
Reiner Schöne, Udo Kroschwald and many more

A production of  
DEPARTURES Film

In co-production with  
deutschfilm  
and Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, ARTE, Hessischer Rundfunk

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and the German Federal Film Board (FFA)

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## **CONTACTS**

### **WORLD SALES**

#### **Picture Tree International**

Zur Börse 12

10247 Berlin

Germany

+49 30 4208 2480

yuan@picturetree-international.com

www.picturetree-international.com

### **PRODUCTION**

#### **DEPARTURES Film**

Endersstr. 62

04177 Leipzig

Germany

+49 341 242 59 58-0

info@departuresfilm.de

www.departuresfilm.de

#### **deutschfilm**

Motzstr. 60

10777 Berlin

Germany

+49 30 23 63 63 51

team@deutschfilm.de

www.deutschfilm.de

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## **CAST**

Herbert  
Marlene  
Sandra  
Eddy  
Specht  
Bodo

PETER KURTH  
LINA WENDEL  
LENA LAUZEMIS  
EDIN HASANOVIC  
REINER SCHÖNE  
UDO KROSCHWALD

## **CREW**

Director  
Screenplay  
Based on a character created by  
Producers

Production Manager  
Cinematography  
Sound Mixer  
Sound Design and  
Re-recording Mixer  
Set Design  
Costume Design  
Make-Up  
Casting  
Editing  
Music

THOMAS STUBER  
THOMAS STUBER, CLEMENS MEYER  
PAUL SALISBURY  
UNDINE FILTER, THOMAS KRÁL,  
ANATOL NITSCHKE  
SOPHIE STÄGLICH  
PETER MATJASKO  
JOHANNES DOBERENZ

KAI TEBBEL  
FRANCIS "KIKO" SOEDER  
NADINE KREMEIER  
HANNA HACKBEIL  
KAREN WENDLAND  
PHILIPP THOMAS  
BERT WREDE

## SYNOPSIS

Former Eastern German boxing champ Herbert has not been a winner in life since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Now a hard-up bouncer and debt collector, he tries to revive the past by coaching his young boxing protégé, Eddy. After a training session, Herbert suddenly collapses with spasms of pain; however, he initially chooses to ignore the signs. When his physical deficiencies become more and more apparent, Herbert finally sees a specialist who ultimately diagnoses him with a fatal neural disease. With not much time left, Herbert struggles with himself and the hard outer shell he's cultivated over time. Not many things really matter to him apart from his 'lost' daughter Sandra, whom he abandoned when the family fell apart. Now a mother herself, Sandra is still deeply hurt and afraid of allowing her dying father to be a part of her life again.

Student Academy Award® winner Thomas Stuber tells the touching story of a lone wolf who takes a long time to find the meaning of his life.

## PRESS NOTE

With **A HEAVY HEART**, young German director Thomas Stuber, winner of a Student Oscar® and the German Screenplay Award, has succeeded in creating a fascinating character study and a "different" kind of boxing film. The bar is set very high for anyone attempting to tell a story from within this milieu: indeed, hardly any other genre is as loaded with the dreams and myths of battle, ascent, victory and defeat. Stuber uses the genre's basic elements in a harmonious combination of realism and personal drama and manages to entirely avoid any stylistic clichés. At the same time, he unobtrusively intertwines the story of a man who loses control over his body – and his life – with everyday life in Leipzig 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In 2014, **A HEAVY HEART**'s leading man Peter Kurth was named Actor of the Year, the most important recognition within the German theatre community, and his performance of failed loner Herbert in this film gives the tragic hero a presence and dignity that even a complete physical deterioration of the body cannot diminish.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

At first, it's just a slight, almost unnoticeable trembling. Then he loses all strength in his tattooed right hand. Shortly thereafter, his leg gives in. Herbert (Peter Kurth) is a debt collector, bouncer, boxing coach, former inmate, former boxer and "The Pride of Leipzig", but right now, he's lying on the floor of his shower, trembling. His body has let him down. At first, Herbert ignores the degeneration. But it spreads. While being tattooed by his friend Specht (Reiner Schöne) – the buddy with whom he's been planning for years to take a Harley trip along Route 66 to Santa Monica – he begins to experience muscle cramps in his entire body. But Herbert clings to this body, to a world in which physical strength is everything. He has no idea what to do without the use of his fists. He rudely keeps his girlfriend Marlene (Lina Wendel) at bay. He has long since broken off contact to his daughter; decades ago, after he was thrown in jail. The only bonds he has are his almost paternal relationship to his protégé Eddy (Edin Hasanovic), whom he's coaching for an important championship boxing fight – and his affection for the angel fish in his aquarium.

When informed that he is suffering from ALS, Herbert's world – his very existence – is shaken. ALS, he finds out, is a neurodegenerative disease that results in the progressive deterioration of the muscles – and, ultimately and inevitably, death. Herbert literally falls out of the world he was living in until then. He collapses in the bathroom of the club where he works as a bouncer and is then beaten up on the street. He has to use a crutch to walk, which makes it impossible for him to continue working. He has reached the end. He locks himself in his apartment, drinks, watches old boxing matches and hits his punching bag until he collapses.

When Herbert learns to accept that he can't win *this* battle, he makes an effort to pick up the pieces of his past. Marlene moves in with him and the mutual affection between them grows steadily. His daughter Sandra (Lena Lauzemis), however, cannot forgive him. She rejects both his clumsy peace offerings and the money he saved for his trip to the USA. She also bans him from having any contact to his granddaughter, whose existence he knew nothing of. Throughout his life, Herbert has spoken very few words, so he has a lot to say. But Sandra does not want to hear any of it. The wounds of her childhood are simply too deep. When his voice gets weaker and weaker, Herbert talks into an old cassette recorder; he searches for the words he wasn't able to find in his life until then. The disease progresses. His next stops are the wheelchair and the nursing home. When Herbert becomes dependent on care, he forces Marlene to leave.

Shortly before the end, Herbert's much-hated wheelchair serves as a Harley substitute, and the streets of Leipzig become his Route 66. He is able to see Eddy win his fight in the ring. And one day, Sandra can only take her daughter Ronja (Lola Liefers) to the nursing home to pick up the boxes with Herbert's belongings.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### THE TEAM

**A HEAVY HEART** was shot in the spring of 2014 in the German cities of Leipzig and Halle. It was directed by Thomas Stuber, a recent winner of the Student Academy Award® and the German Screenplay Award. Stuber also co-wrote the screenplay with multiple award-winning writer Clemens Meyer. The film was produced by Undine Filter and Thomas Král (DEPARTURES Film) in co-production with Anatol Nitschke (deutschfilm). Stuber, Filter and Král are a proven team, having worked together on *OF DOGS AND HORSES*, Thomas Stuber's award-winning short film based on a short story by Clemens Meyer who also took over a small role in that film. In **A HEAVY HEART**, Meyer once again plays a supporting part. "While studying in Ludwigsburg, Thomas approached us with the screenplay for his graduating film *OF DOGS AND HORSES*," says Undine Filter. The producers saw tremendous potential in both the film material and the director himself, and the decision to grant him responsibility for a feature film was easy to make even before the huge success of *OF DOGS AND HORSES*. "Thomas is fantastic at telling the modest bliss of outsiders in a grand cinematic way, which he succeeds at once more with **A HEAVY HEART**," the producer adds enthusiastically. "Thomas Stuber is able to draw the audience into the world of the characters, to the extent that true understanding is possible."

### CHARACTER AND MILIEU STUDY

According to the producers and the director, **A HEAVY HEART** is much more a character and milieu study than a film about boxing. As Filter notes, "the fact that Herbert is a boxer definitely defines his character, but we're more interested in telling the story of a man who had always defined himself by his physical strength, his muscles and appearance and who now, after receiving the ALS diagnosis, is forced to reorient himself. His strength disappears, his body fails him and all the strategies he had been using up until that point don't work anymore. He is forced to redefine himself and find a different source of strength." It's a battle that asks more of Herbert than any battle he ever fought in the ring. "Herbert is someone who has, in many ways, fallen out of his own era, he never really arrives in contemporary society," says Stuber. "He moves in a niche, a milieu at the edge of legality. It's a place where he has found his role – one that he loses in the course of the film."

### THE SETTING: LEIPZIG

It is no coincidence that **A HEAVY HEART** takes place in Leipzig. In fact, Stuber, Meyer and the producers all call the city their home. "These days, there are so many films and TV shows set in Berlin, but there are very few about central Germany," notes Filter. "We are eager to bring stories like this one to the screen." And the director adds: "**A HEAVY HEART** could just as well be set in New York, but Leipzig is what Clemens and I stand for. I believe it is important that everything has a personal touch to it, and Leipzig is a great place to tell stories of outsiders, precisely because the city is not a big metropolis."

It was just as important to the producers and director to show how the collapse of the GDR continues to have an effect on people's lives until this day. "We wanted to tell stories that were anchored in the region and in the experiences of the people who live there," says Stuber.

### CHRONOLOGICAL FILMING

**A HEAVY HEART** was shot in chronological order, which is always a unique approach to filmmaking. For Stuber and the producers, there was no other possibility to shoot **A HEAVY HEART**, seeing as the intensity that distinguishes the film would not have been possible any other way. "Sure, producers don't like to do it that way because it is much more complicated and expensive, but it was clear to us that it was the only way for our leading man and our

director to grow into the character and the story. And, of course, there was the added factor that Peter Kurth has to lose more than ten kilos and a noticeable amount of muscle mass in the course of the film. That too would have created problems in the filming process if we hadn't shot chronologically," explains Filter.

## **HERBERT AS A FORMER INMATE**

One of Herbert's tattoos bears the inscription *Torgau*. "We discussed this a lot," says Filter. Torgau is known primarily as a jail for political prisoners in GDR times, even though it was used just as much a detention center for criminals. "We did not want Herbert to be seen as a political prisoner, his character is not a political person," she sums up the discussion. Ultimately, they decided in favor of the tattoo: "Anyone who was arrested in Leipzig, no matter what they did, ended up in Torgau. Herbert too." The time in jail was a defining period for him, and he thus had a souvenir of this time inscribed on his back. The decision for the tattoo in the film was a matter of authenticity – both historical and in terms of the character.

## **THE END**

Herbert does not achieve to gain his daughter's forgiveness. For Stuber and the producers, it was clear from the very beginning that the ending would not be happy: "We did not want to tell a fairy tale, there is no redemption," the director says. Filter adds: "For me, this is precisely where the script is at its strongest – each character does what they have to do, but that's exactly what causes the tragedy: Herbert threatens Marlene to keep her from sacrificing herself for him. Marlene has to go even though she loves him. Bodo fires his buddy Herbert, because as a debt collector, he is of no use to him anymore. And his friend Specht would rather go drinking with him than harp on him to take his medication." "The film gets lighter towards the end," Stuber points out. Herbert has accepted his fate and can even laugh from time to time, which makes it easier to take for the viewer.



## INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR THOMAS STUBER

### **How did you come to do this project?**

Actually, **A HEAVY HEART** came to me. Producer Undine Filter gave me a screenplay written by a Berlin-based author. I found the main character Herbert to be incredibly fascinating. In this screenplay, Herbert was exactly the way he is now in the film: he has the same disease and this life-changing experience that determines his further behavior. But back then he was embedded in an entirely different story where the emphasis was on his criminal past.

I gave the story to my friend Clemens and asked him if he wanted to write the screenplay together with me. Herbert is pretty close to Clemens' life and the stories he tells. And Clemens was interested in the same aspects I was.

### **Boxing is very prominent in Clemens Meyer's texts.**

Indeed, but not just that one aspect – his stories deal with characters on the edges of society, people who are just looking for a little bit of happiness. That's something we both share.

### **A HEAVY HEART begins in the boxing ring. Boxing plays an important role in the life of the main character. Did you shoot a boxing film?**

No, I don't think so.

### **Why not?**

It's true that the world of boxing – or, better said, the loss of that world after Herbert receives his diagnosis – plays a very big role for the main character himself. But I don't see **A HEAVY HEART** as a traditional boxing film. It's not a genre film. In the first place, the main character is not in the ring, he's more of an observer, comparable to Clint Eastwood's **MILLION DOLLAR BABY**, which was, to a certain extent, a role model for our film. But in my opinion, **A HEAVY HEART** is less of a traditional boxing film than **MILLION DOLLAR BABY**. Herbert's criminal past, his work as a bouncer and debt collector; all these things play an equally important role. I wasn't interested in a pure boxing film, or in a sports film. I was much more interested in a drama exploring a man's tragic fate.

### **Just like in OF DOGS AND HORSES, A HEAVY HEART also involves a grave illness that sets the story in motion. You seem to have a fondness for illness as a narrative catalyst.**

It would appear so, yes. I haven't made too many films yet, but it seems that there are indeed certain aspects that always creep into my work unconsciously. Illness as a driving force, a force that smashes into a life, a character that is forced to face the illness and has no chance. This suffering – or also not suffering – is fascinating to me. The way people deal with it. But I couldn't tell you where this fascination comes from.

### **The post-Wall era and how it continues to influence people plays an important role in the film. It is there subliminally all the time. But it is mostly told on the side and not necessarily overblown. How important is this era for the film and for you as the director?**

It's very important! I'm a child of the East and of the post-Wall era. I grew up in Leipzig and I was seven years old when the Wall came down. Everything that was connected either directly or indirectly with the fall of the Wall – this collapse – I didn't experience consciously. And what came before that, the GDR, is only a veiled memory. The post-Wall era in Leipzig, on the other hand, is something I experienced profoundly. It's a tangible location, a tangible era. I know the nuances, the small differences. I know how the people behaved and how they talked. I know how people continued to live despite the feeling of not belonging anymore. That's fascinating to me, so I can tell stories about that. What I am *not* interested in are theme-based films concerning the post-Wall era. There are plenty of GDR dramas, "escape" films and even Stasi movies.

**At the beginning of the film, Herbert is purely a physical entity. He clings for a long time to this physicality because it made him what he was. Only when there's nothing left to cling to is he able to pursue the possibility of approaching others and changing himself.** Absolutely. Herbert comes from a milieu in which people are fixated on bodies and physical signals, on muscles, tattoos and body language. But this body is a type of armor Herbert uses to lock away all of his wounds, missed opportunities, mistakes that he made, etc. His body language always said "Don't get too close to me!" In the very moment in which this protective shell breaks and he doesn't know what to do – only then can he let everything in, even though it's painful. And, in the end, the illness gives him perhaps the happiest year of his life.

**Peter Kurth's performance in the lead role is breathtaking. Even though Herbert fades before our eyes physically, he never loses our attention and his commanding presence.** Yes, Peter gives a tremendous acting performance – in spite of the fact that he had to gain roughly 15 kilos before we started shooting and then lost 13 kilos in the process of making the film. Towards the end, his work gets increasingly intense, even though he's sitting in a wheelchair and can hardly move. He worked hard to achieve that.

**How did he prepare himself for the role?**

I encouraged him to visit Harry, an ALS patient in Switzerland whom I had met while doing research for the film. That was absolutely necessary – otherwise Peter would have had to make up the movements and form of speech himself. There's a very thin line between a faithful and mocking depiction of the disease, and it can't descend into slapstick. Peter was quite afraid of that. The three days we spent with Harry were very, very important. Peter studied him precisely, his facial expressions, for example, and how he holds his hands.

**A HEAVY HEART has a bleak and ambivalent end, at best. Was a happy ending ever an option?**

No, never. It was always clear that there wasn't going to be any kind of miraculous salvation at the end.

**Even a reconciliation with his daughter does not come to pass. Only after his death does she get close to her father. There would have been a possibility for a happy end there, right?**

That's right. But there was never a question about that. Clemens and I were convinced that the end could not be too conciliatory. However, the final 20 minutes are the most positive in the film: the closer Herbert comes to death, the lighter the movie becomes. That was very important to me. The film does not need a happy ending. I wanted catharsis instead. As far as I'm concerned, the fact that Herbert opens up at the end, that he wants to be a grandfather, that he laughs, has fun and *still* dies, and that his daughter's attempt at a reconciliation comes too late – all of this is much more powerful than a happy end. In fact, the idea of linking this lightness with the inevitable fate, *this* is what makes up the strength of the film. This juxtaposition of happiness and sadness is the stuff of life.

## INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR CLEMENS MEYER

**Mr. Meyer, you are a writer, which makes you a type of lone fighter. But you co-wrote the screenplay to A HEAVY HEART together with Thomas Stuber. What were the difficulties and/or advantages of a cooperative effort such as this?**

The advantage of co-writing, if and when it works, is that it makes working easier. The ideas just flow as a result of the permanent exchange of two minds. When you're constantly questioning each other, it furthers the creative process. It's an effective way to work, but you need a bit of time before it really gets going. At this point, Thomas and I have worked on several projects together, so we're well matched by now. And each one of us knows what he has in the other person! I would never do work like that on my own, I'm not a screenwriter.

**How would you describe Herbert?**

Herbert is a very special person in the true sense of the word. He has both tenderness and violence in him, but he also has big dreams. He tends to break everything. Herbert is a very ambivalent person. Someone who only recognizes what he's capable of when he's faced with his own mortality.

**Was it this ambivalence that drew you to the character?**

Yes. We wanted to flesh the character out. Herbert is not a crude brute; he's not a typical debt collector. He is overcome by tenderness and compassion again and again. Still, he's a dangerous person and succumbs very quickly to cycles of violence. He's used to it because of his past and his time in prison. He constantly wants to smash his head through the wall, and is eventually forced to recognize that his fists are not what bring him forward. He realizes he is going to have to explore other paths.

**Were your own contacts to that environment and to the world of boxing important for your work on A HEAVY HEART?**

Not necessarily. It had to be realistic, so it was beneficial, of course, that I know my way around that world. We wanted to break with the traditional idea of tough guys with golden hearts, so we had to be really careful we didn't end up fulfilling some sort of cliché. But **A HEAVY HEART** is not primarily a milieu film or a boxing film. The environment and the boxing play more of a supporting role, even though boxing is important in Herbert's life. It kept him alive for years. But, in the end, the film is about other things. It's about his relationship to his girlfriend, to his daughter and granddaughter. It's about dying with dignity. **A HEAVY HEART** is ultimately a film about saying goodbye and dying. It's about someone who tries desperately to right his wrongs and give his life a new twist – a life that he pretty much drove into the ground.

**You play a small guest role in A HEAVY HEART, much like in all of the films based on your stories. Are we going to see you working as an actor more often in the future?**

Only in cameo roles such as these where I'm in the shot very briefly. I really enjoy doing them. I'm not an actor, though, and I can't imagine taking on a bigger role. That might mean a lot more work!

## **INTERVIEW WITH PETER KURTH**

### **Mr. Kurth, how would you describe Herbert?**

It's very hard to describe a character that I play myself. In a nutshell, Herbert is a regular guy like any other. But he's got some rough edges, and a lot more problems.

### **What drew you to the role?**

The rough edges! For actors, it's always most interesting when a character has as strong a presence as Herbert. That's what I like about such roles. Plus, playing Herbert was not only a mental but also a physical challenge. A role like this does not come around too often. It's also a fantastic story!

### **What was the greatest challenge?**

In physical terms, the most difficult thing was to gain weight by eating more. I had to double my usual daily intake. My body was not happy about it.

### **Gaining weight was more difficult than losing it? For most people, it's the other way around.**

It was different for me. I had to gain weight at the beginning of the film and then lose it in the process of shooting. But gaining the weight allowed me to become mentally connected to Herbert, and after that, losing weight was less of a problem.

### **You shot A HEAVY HEART in chronological order, which is rare in filmmaking. What kind of experience was that for you?**

It was a big plus. Those jumps in time that usually happen on a film set usually occur for financial or logistical reasons. But there are tremendous artistic advantages to making a film chronologically and not jumping back and forth from scene to scene in terms of time. Especially in a story like this, where I had to work with loss and an advancing illness.

### **In the beginning, Herbert defines himself entirely through his body. His physical self is also a big part of his charisma. How did you manage to keep Herbert's appealing presence in spite of his advancing physical deterioration?**

Any attempt to portray an illness poses great challenges. You can end up taking the wrong route, especially when it comes to diseases you haven't experienced yourself and thus can't really comprehend. But that's the added attraction of such a part – the fact that you run the risk of failing completely. What really helped me was meeting and spending time with Harry, a man who suffers from ALS.

### **What was your impression of Harry?**

Harry is a really tough guy. His head is pretty clear, and he feels his losses on a daily basis. How do people deal with something like that? He's a hero to me. Every day, he makes two rounds of his living room and kitchen with his walker. It takes half an hour and it's like a marathon for him. He does it day after day. He fights against the loss. That really touched me.

### **You underwent intensive boxing training in preparation for the role.**

Those two things, boxing training and getting the chance to meet Harry, were special moments that helped me truly to get into the role. It was a great asset to meet people and go places that otherwise aren't part of my own daily life.

### **A HEAVY HEART takes place in Leipzig, and almost everyone on the team has an East German background. Did that play a role in making the film and during the shooting?**

I would not attach too much importance to that. Good stories are universal. No matter what side of the border you are on – especially a border that disappeared over 20 years ago. Of course, the story takes place in locations that I am familiar with, and that's helpful. And our common background made our teamwork easier.

## BIOGRAPHIES / CAST

### PETER KURTH – HERBERT

Peter Kurth was born on April 4, 1957 in Güstrow. He is a graduate of the State Acting School in Rostock and has made a name for himself over the past several decades as an expert in playing unusual roles, first and foremost on stage, but also in film and TV productions. He was a member of the ensemble at the Schauspiel Leipzig, at Hamburg's Thalia Theatre and at Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin. He is currently a member of the ensemble at the Schauspiel Stuttgart. In 2014, Peter Kurth was voted "Actor of the Year," the most important prize handed out by the German theatre community. Since the 1990s, he has been seen in an increasing number of TV and feature films, including GOOD BYE LENIN! (2003, Director: Wolfgang Becker), A FRIEND OF MINE (2006, Director: Sebastian Schipper), WHISKY MIT WODKA (2009, Director: Andreas Dresen) and GOLD (2013, Director: Thomas Arslan). In **A HEAVY HEART**, he proves once again his tremendous talent and diversity as a leading man.

Filmography (selection):

2015 **A HEAVY HEART** ("Herbert"), Director: Thomas Stuber

2015 ICH UND KAMINSKI, Director: Wolfgang Becker

2015 DIE KLEINEN UND DIE BÖSEN, Director: Markus Sehr

2014 SCHMITKE, Director: Stepán Altrichter

2014 DAUGHTERS ("Töchter"), Director: Maria Speth

2013 GOLD, Director: Thomas Arslan

2010 IN THE SHADOWS ("Im Schatten"), Director: Thomas Arslan

2009 WHISKY MIT WODKA, Director: Andreas Dresen

2006 A FRIEND OF MINE ("Ein Freund von mir"), Director: Sebastian Schipper

2003 GOOD BY LENIN!, Director: Wolfgang Becker

### LINA WENDEL – Marlene

Lina Wendel was born and raised in Berlin. From 1984 to 1989, she completed her degree in acting at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Art. After that, she garnered her first acting experience at the Neues Theater Halle under the direction of Peter Sodan, where she took on several major roles. In 1992, she moved to Hamburg, where she worked on stage at the Ernst Deutsch Theatre as well as the Winterhuder Fährhaus. During this time, she played leading roles in several episodes of the TV shows "Großstadtrevier" and "Tatort" starring Manfred Krug. Back in Berlin, she worked at the legendary Theater am Kurfürstendamm. From 1995 until the birth of her daughter in 2000, Wendel was a member of the ensemble at the Cottbus State Theatre. In order to spend more time with her daughter, Wendel decided to reject a permanent position at the theatre and instead devote herself to film work.

In 2013, she received praise for her leading role in SILVI directed by Nico Sommer. She went on to receive rave reviews and several awards for that performance – including the award for Best Actress at film festivals in Verona, Schwerin and Ludwigshafen.

Filmography (selection):

2015 **A HEAVY HEART** ("Herbert"), Director: Thomas Stuber

2015 DIE FÜCHSIN (TV series), Director: Samira Radsai

2014 TATORT – BLUTSCHULD (TV series), Director: Stefan Kornatz

2013 SILVI, Director: Nico Sommer

2009 SOLOKIND, Director: Nico Sommer

2002 A GHOST AT THE GATEWAY TO TIME („Spuk am Tor der Zeit“), Director: Günter Meyer

### **LENA LAUZEMIS – Sandra**

Lena Lauzemis was born and raised in Kreuzberg in West Berlin and played her first stage roles when she was a teenager. After completing her studies at Berlin's Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Art, she went on to work at the Münchner Kammerspiele. In 2010, she played the role of Gudrun Ensslin in Andres Veiel's IF NOT US, WHO?, for which she was nominated for the German Film Award.

Filmography (selection):

2015 **A HEAVY HEART (“Herbert”)**, Director: **Thomas Stuber**

2015 STILLE RESERVEN, Director: Valentin Hitz

2014 THE CHAMBERMAID LYNN (“Das Zimmermädchen Lynn”), Director: Ingo Haeb

2010 IF NOT US, WHO? (“Wer wenn nicht wir”), Director: Andres Veiel

2005 DIE HITLERKANTATE, Director: Jutta Brückner

2004 YUGOTRIP, Director: Nadya Derado

### **EDIN HASANOVIC – Eddy**

Edin Hasanovic was born on April 2, 1992 in Bosnia. After moving to Berlin, he got his first acting experience at the age of 13 at the Berliner Ensemble. Since then he has played a number of roles on TV and in feature films. He took on his first leading role in SHIFTING THE BLAME (2012), for which he received an acting award at São Paulo International Film Festival and was nominated for the German Film Award.

Filmography (selection):

2015 **A HEAVY HEART (“Herbert”)**, Director: **Thomas Stuber**

2013 TATORT – GEGEN DEN KOPF (TV series), Director: Stephan Wagner

2012 SHIFTING THE BLAME („Schuld sind immer die Anderen“), Director: Lars-Gunnar Lotz

2012 DAS LEBEN IST NICHTS FÜR FEIGLINGE, Director: André Erkau

## **BIOGRAPHIES / CREW**

### **THOMAS STUBER – Director, Screenplay**

Thomas Stuber was born in Leipzig in 1981. After graduating from high school, he completed a number of different internships and assistantships in the film industry. Starting in 2002, he worked on several film and TV productions as a script/continuity supervisor and director's assistant. From 2004 to 2011, he studied stage direction at the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg. While completing his studies, he received a number of awards for his short film **ES GEHT UNS GUT** (2006) and for **TEENAGE ANGST** (2008), including the award for Best Emerging German Film at Potsdam Sehnsüchte Film Festival for the latter. **TEENAGE ANGST** was also invited to screen at Berlin International Film Festival in the Perspektive Deutsches Kino section in 2008. His graduating film **OF DOGS AND HORSES** (2011) won the Student Oscar® in Silver as well as the German Short Film Award. Together with Clemens Meyer, Thomas Stuber was nominated for the German Screenplay Award for their work on **A HEAVY HEART** in 2014, and they received that award for **IN DEN GÄNGEN** in 2015.

Filmography (selection):

2015 **A HEAVY HEART** (“Herbert”)

2014 **TATORT** (TV series)

2011 **OF DOGS AND HORSES** (“Von Hunden und Pferden”)

2008 **TEENAGE ANGST**

2006 **ES GEHT UNS GUT**

### **CLEMENS MEYER – Screenplay**

Clemens Meyer was born in Halle/Saale in 1977 and currently lives in Leipzig. In 2006, he published his debut novel "Als wir träumten", the film adaptation of which (**AS WE WERE DREAMING**, 2015) directed by Andreas Dresen and was shot in Leipzig. Clemens Meyer went on to publish two collections of short stories, "All the Lights" (Original title: "Die Nacht, die Lichter: Stories", 2008) – which formed the basis for Thomas Stuber's short film **OF DOGS AND HORSES** (2011) – and "Gewalten. Ein Tagebuch" (2010). He has received various awards for his work, including the Leipzig Book Fair Award in 2008. In the fall of 2013, Meyer published his second novel, "Im Stein", which was shortlisted for the German Book Award and received the Bremen Literature Award. Together with Thomas Stuber, Meyer co-wrote the screenplays to the films **A HEAVY HEART** and **IN DEN GÄNGEN**, for which they were nominated for the German Screenplay Award two years in a row, winning the award for **IN DEN GÄNGEN** in 2015.

### **UNDINE FILTER – Producer**

Undine Filter was born in the town of Neustrelitz in 1972. In 1990, she moved to Berlin where she pursued her studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin while at the same time working as an evening director at the Berliner Ensemble. In 2000, she completed her Masters in Theatre Studies / Cultural Communication and English & American Studies. After that, she entered the film business and has since worked on many film productions for X-Filme, Twenty Twenty Vision, Pallas Film and Egoli Tossell Film, among others. She has worked on various, mostly international feature films such as Sam Gabarski's **IRINA PALM** (2007), Michael Hoffman's **THE LAST STATION** (2009) and **CARLOS** (2010) by Olivier Assayas. In 2010, she founded the production company **DEPARTURES Film** together with producer Thomas Král. Undine Filter is a member of the European Film Academy and the German Film Academy.

### **THOMAS KRÁL – Producer**

Thomas Král was born in Karl-Marx-Stadt (today: Chemnitz) in 1977. In 2004, he completed his engineering studies at the Hochschule Mittweida in the department of Media Technology. During his studies, he worked as a Unit Production Manager on a number of international feature film projects. Starting in 2006, he took on the position of Production Manager and Head of Production for different companies working on national and international feature films including FOUR MINUTES (2006) by Chris Kraus, Sam Gabarski's IRINA PALM (2007) and Stephan Komandarev's THE WORLD IS BIG AND SALVATION LURKS AROUND THE CORNER (2008). Thomas Král is a member of the European Film Academy.

### **DEPARTURES FILM GmbH – Production company**

Undine Filter and Thomas Král founded Leipzig-based independent film production company DEPARTURES Film GmbH in April 2010. DEPARTURES Film develops and produces feature films and TV movies for national and international markets. The two producers work regularly with established filmmakers but also with up-and-coming talent. DEPARTURES Film got underway in 2011 with Thomas Stuber's short film OF DOGS AND HORSES, which went on to receive a Student Oscar®. They followed up with the feature film ROCKER directed by Romanian-born Marian Crisan in 2012. The film premiered in the New Directors competition at San Sebastian International Film Festival. In 2014, Andrea Sedláčková's FAIR PLAY was selected to run in competition at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival and was up for an Oscar® in 2015 representing the Czech Republic as Best Non-English Language Film. In addition to Thomas Stuber's **A HEAVY HEART**, one of the most recent projects pursued by DEPARTURES Film is Elena Hazanov's THE PUPPET SYNDROME (2015).

### **ANATOL NITSCHKE – Producer**

Anatol Nitschke was born in Munich in 1960. Between 1983 and 1999, he held several positions, among them cinema operator and manager at NEF 2 Filmverleih, sales manager and management assistant at Filmwelt-Prokino and managing director at Senator Film Verleih. In February 2000, Nitschke co-founded the distribution company X Verleih AG with fellow managing directors Manuela Stehr and Stefan Arndt. From within this context, Nitschke carried out production managing duties on films like Tom Tykwer's THE PRINCESS AND THE WARRIOR (2000), Wolfgang Becker's GOOD BYE LENIN! (2003), Dani Levy's FO FOR ZUCKER! (2004), Marc Rothemund's SOPHIE SCHOLL: THE FINAL DAYS (2005), Andres Veiel's BLACK BOX BRD (2001) and Andreas Dresen's SUMMER IN BERLIN (2005).

In April 2007, Nitschke became managing director at the new Senator Film Verleih. In February 2009, deutschfilm GmbH was founded, a joint venture between Anatol Nitschke and Senator Entertainment AG. Since then, as managing partner of deutschfilm, he has produced LESSONS OF A DREAM (2011) starring Daniel Brühl as soccer pioneer Konrad Koch as well as the Bavarian comedy WAS WEG IS, IS WEG (2012) directed by Christian Lerch. He is the co-producer of Philipp Stölzl's YOUNG GOETHE IN LOVE (2010) and Andres Veiel's IF NOT US, WHO? (2011) and he released Klaus Lemke's BERLIN FÜR HELDEN (2012). In 2013, the culture-clash comedy UMMAH – UNTER FREUNDEN he produced together with Hans Weingartner was released. Nitschke is one of the co-producers of Sebastian Schipper's VICTORIA (2015), which was awarded the Silver Bear for "outstanding artistic achievement" at the 2015 Berlin International Film Festival and went on to win the German Film Award in six categories.

Among his projects that are currently in development are RAINER, a melodrama about the life of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and MAKE LOVE, a modern sex education film by Ziska Riemann, director of LOLLIPOP MONSTER.

From 2013 to June 2015, Anatol Nitschke headed Edition Senator, the label designed to showcase German cinema at Senator Film Verleih, and he released Dominik Graf's BELOVED SISTERS. Anatol Nitschke is a member of the European Film Academy and the German Film Academy.



### **DEUTSCHFILM GmbH – Production company**

deutschfilm GmbH was founded in 2009 as a joint venture between Anatol Nitschke and Senator Entertainment AG. The company is dedicated to film production as well as to the acquisition of German films for theatrical release. It also performs marketing duties for all of the (co-)produced and acquired films. deutschfilm's work covers the entire spectrum of cinema from mainstream comedies and high-end prestige projects to exciting debut films.

### **PETER MATJASKO – Cinematographer**

Peter Matjasko was born in Frankfurt am Main in 1978. He began his university studies in film and media in Dortmund before moving on to the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg in Ludwigsburg in 2004. While completing his studies, he made several short films, music videos and advertising spots. He received the German Camera Award for his first short film AKUMI (2005). In 2007, he won the First Steps Award for Stella Artois commercial SCHUMANN'S FLUCHT. He finished his studies in 2009, and his graduating short film THE GRANDFATHER earned him a nomination for the German Camera Award.

While studying, Matjasko worked with director Thomas Stuber on TEENAGE ANGST (2008), for which he won the Cinematography Award at Potsdam Sehnsüchte Film Festival, and the short film OF DOGS AND HORSES (2011), which was nominated for the German Camera Award and won a Student Oscar®. **A HEAVY HEART** marks a continuation of Stuber and Matjasko's successful collaboration.

### **PICTURE TREE INTERNATIONAL – World Sales**

Picture Tree International GmbH is a world sales and production company with headquarters in Berlin. The core business of the company is worldwide licensing of film rights and the coproduction of international feature films in an integrated business model.

Picture Tree International GmbH was founded in December 2012 and currently represents up to 12 theatrical feature films per year, ranging from mainstream to arthouse cross-over productions.