

**CHRISTINE
OSTERMAYER**

COMING OF AGE

**KARL
MERKATZ**

*It's never too late
for new love*

A FILM BY SABINE HIEBLER AND GERHARD ERTL



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WITH SUPPORT FROM



CHRISTINE
OSTERMAYER KARL
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COMING OF AGE

*It's never too late
for new love*



WITH: **ERNI MANGOLD** • **BRANKO SAMAROVSKI**
JOSEPH LORENZ • **SUSI STACH** • **CLAUDIA MARTINI**

A FILM BY
SABINE HIEBLER AND GERHARD ERTL

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY: **SABINE HIEBLER** UND **GERHARD ERTL** • CAMERA: **WOLFGANG THALER**
PRODUCTION DESIGNER: **CONRAD MORITZ REINHARDT** • WARDROBE: **DIETLIND ROTT** • MAKEUP: **DANIELA LANGAUER**
SOUND: **KLAUS KELLERMANN** • CASTING: **EVA ROTH** • EDITED BY: **KARIN HAMMER** • MUSIC: **MILOS TODOROVSKI, WOLFGANG SCHLÖGL**
SOUND DESIGN: **KONRAD GLAS** • RERECORDING MIXER: **BERNHARD MAISCH**
PRODUCTION MANAGER: **GERHARD HANNAK** • LINE PRODUCER: **MICHAEL KITZBERGER**
PRODUCERS: **NIKOLAUS GEYRHALTER, MARKUS GLASER, MICHAEL KITZBERGER, WOLFGANG WIDERHOFER**
AN NGF GEYRHALTERFILM.COM PRODUCTION

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SYNOPSIS

COMING OF AGE – True love knows no bounds. Rosa meets Bruno: Two people in their 80s who had considered themselves cut off from life suddenly experience what it's like to live and love again. Their encounter makes them follow their dreams and instantly say yes to one another. Laughing together and living life together is suddenly exciting again, but Rosa has cancer and only six months to live. She and Bruno decide to break out. He leaves his wife and a married life that has long been nothing more than a routine. Rosa escapes from the pensioners' home where her niece would like to see her looked after. But Rosa and Bruno have other plans, and they move into a new apartment together.

Does happiness have an expiry date? Or are the memories of those very special moments with a person you only meet once in your life more important?

COMING OF AGE – is a touching film about a unique couple in a society that ignores the elderly. A love story about two people who aren't supposed to enjoy the freedoms that love brings. Yet, against all odds, they prove that it's never too late for new love.



CAST & CREW

KARL MERKATZ - BRUNO
CHRISTINE OSTERMAYER - ROSA
ERNI MANGOLD - HERTA
BRANKO SAMAROVSKI - KARL
JOSEPH LORENZ - WERNER
SUSI STACH - WALTRAUD
CLAUDIA MARTINI - EVELYNE

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY
SABINE HIEBLER
GERHARD ERTL

CAMERA
WOLFGANG THALER

SOUND
KLAUS KELLERMANN

PRODUCTION DESIGNER
CONRAD MORITZ REINHARDT

COSTUMES
DIETLIND ROTT

MAKEUP
DANIELA LANGAUER

EDITED BY
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MUSIC
MILOS TODOROVSKI,
WOLFGANG SCHLOEGL

CASTING
EVA ROTH

PRODUCTION MANAGER
GERHARD HANNAK

LINE PRODUCER
MICHAEL KITZBERGER

PRODUCERS
NIKOLAUS GEYRHALTER
MARKUS GLASER
MICHAEL KITZBERGER
WOLFGANG WIDERHOFER

PHOTOS
NGF
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A PRODUCTION BY NGF (GEYRHALTER, GLASER, KITZBERGER, WIDERHOFER) FILMPRODUKTION
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INTERVIEWS





Not being stuck on a single character

CHRISTINE OSTERMAYER and KARL MERKATZ

How did each of you come to appear in this film, and what did you like about telling this story in a film?

CHRISTINE OSTERMAYER:

It was quite simple. Sabine Hiebler and Gerhard Ertl sent me the script, I loved it and said yes right away.

KARL MERKATZ:

It was the same with me. They called and asked to meet: They had written a screenplay and wanted me to appear in the film. Bruno is the man's name, and the story revolves around getting old. And I said, OK, I'm old myself, so come on over. We drank a little coffee and probably a glass of wine, and they explained the story to me. I asked them, who's going to play the other lead? Christine Ostermayer. Then I said, great, because I think she's wonderful. On top of that, I really liked the story

CHRISTINE OSTERMAYER:

Because it really is an extraordinarily good script

Considering the story, you have to wonder: How does an audience member believe, from the very beginning, that someone who's seriously ill is still desirable? Or, do I buy this radical type of love? The two of you do a great job conveying that. And this story would never work any other way

KARL MERKATZ:

Love is an emotion that has nothing to do with age. And that's why I thought it was so beautiful, that here are these two old people who meet unexpectedly and fall in love, even though Bruno has been married for over 50 years. Because life always has something in store that you'd never expect. Today's the present and the next second is the future, and no one knows what will happen in this future. He's not attractive, she's not tall, and she's such a sensitive woman, he's just a printer, a manual laborer who's a little rough around the edges, at times, but love's still something...

CHRISTINE OSTERMAYER:

They're from different social classes. But the chemistry's right.

KARL MERKATZ:

There's no question about that. Are you rich. Do you have money? Man, I didn't think I'd be able to afford their apartment, how will I pay for it? Oh well, it'll work out somehow. And it does.

An interesting aspect involving the apartment: The escape from the retirement home leads to a situation that's eventually too much for them to handle.

KARL MERKATZ:

I see this specific case a little differently, and I think it's right, the way things turn out for Bruno. He's been taken care of all his life, a classic husband. Maybe he did the dishes every once in a while, though that wasn't his job. And then suddenly, there's this situation he's not able to deal with, because it's unlike anything he's ever done, and everything comes crashing down as a result..

CHRISTINE OSTERMAYER:

But regardless of what Bruno can handle and what he can't: I think it's a good message, trying to be there completely for somebody else. We all need a guardian angel. And Rosa found the right person at the right time. She wants to spend her final days in dignity, in familiar surroundings. And then she meets Bruno, who suddenly starts doing something he's not really able to do, out of love for her. At times I felt that he becomes more human as a result of meeting her.

Christine Ostermayer, how did you approach this role, of a woman who has only six months to live?

CHRISTINE OSTERMAYER:

That was part of the challenge. In the past few years I've witnessed some lives ending dramatically, among my family and friends. Without giving too much of the film and its end away: In contrast to Karl Merkatz, I support assisted suicide. I think that there can be certain situations in life that become unbearable, and you need some help bringing things to an end.

Karl Merkatz, there are few if any Austrian actors in post-WWII film and theater who have achieved such iconic status with just a few parts. Playing this role, a man who's led an easy life for much too long and is then in a sense reawakened: In your opinion, how will your public see that?

CHRISTINE OSTERMAYER:

They'll enjoy it greatly. He's always been well liked by the public. Even though he leaves his wife. The fans will enjoy watching it.

KARL MERKATZ:

People, even young ones, go along with me and my acting more than you would sometimes think. The most recent programs I've done, with readings and music, have nothing at all to do with Mundl or Bockerer. Still, everyone sits through them, and afterwards they say, Mr. Merkatz, we really enjoyed that. And it will be the same with this film. A lot of people will say, oh, Merkatz, he plays Mundl, let's watch it. And they'll be touched. I'm sure of that.

CHRISTINE OSTERMAYER:

That's our job: Not being stuck on a single character.







In support of personal freedom

SABINE HIEBLER and GERHARD ERTL

You wanted to make a film about a romance....

SABINE HIEBLER:

Yes, and we spent a great deal of time looking for a story. At some point it all became simple, after we realized that we're getting older too. It then became obvious that it would have to be a romance with elderly characters.

GERHARD ERTL:

This realization, that it's not really Karl Merkatz at the age of 80, it's us, and we're talking about aging and what we'll be in 20, 30, 40 years – that was sufficient reason to take the material and make it into a film.

That takes us to this film's expected audience. At first glance you could say, oh, a film with old people for old people. But in fact it also involves the generation of 40 to 50 year olds who are increasingly forced to deal with care for the elderly, illness and death.

SABINE HIEBLER:

Yes, that was another aspect. Like lots of other people, we've seen it more and more often in our family, a relative getting old and needing care. That's a theme that a great many people can identify with, who are moved by it and think about it. Unfortunately, most of them do this on their own, because hardly anybody talks about it, and when they do, it's solely in a limited group.

GERHARD ERTL:

It's a taboo subject. You deal with it within the family, rather than in public.

To stick with the romance approach: COMING OF AGE isn't about a couple that's been married for a long time and has to face the realities of illness and getting old, it's about a new love facing a time limit and everything that involves. How was this idea born?

SABINE HIEBLER:

Fortunately, love's a radical thing. All great love stories involve an ideal that prevails over norms and conventions. Romeo and Juliet or Philemon and Baucis: Those are beautiful scenarios for ideals that we hold and live according to. And something like that is what we had in mind in this case

Karl Merkatz and Christine Ostermayer, how did you decide to cast them?

GERHARD ERTL:

It's important to us that the film reaches as large an audience as possible with this theme. And it became obvious relatively soon that Karl Merkatz, with his talent as an actor and level of fame, would be ideal for Bruno.

SABINE HIEBLER:

Christine Ostermayer is a great actor, and she has this wonderful radiance. And the great thing about the two of them as a couple are their differences. Karl's extremely physical, and he plays Bruno as a man who acts quickly rather than mulling over a matter. Christine as Rosa, on the other hand, is a subtle and delicate character. They might meet, but under normal circumstances they wouldn't try to adapt to each other. Because both

of them have been thrown for a loop, as a result of this end of the road where they're both starting something new, they come together.

An important part of the story in COMING OF AGE is that, on the one hand, there are established institutions that are expected to provide care for old people. And on the other hand there are also individual needs that resist being shut up there, to do things oneself and maintain responsibility for and control over oneself for as long as possible.

GERHARD ERTL:

COMING OF AGE is an appeal in support of self-determination, individualism and freedom. That doesn't necessarily mean that the institutions are so bad. But you can easily end up in a situation where you're unable to break out of your routine, your familiar crust. In other words, a lot would have to happen in that area.

SABINE HIEBLER:

The people within the institutions are set in what they do. What we wanted in the film was that both the family, its individual members, and representatives of the institutions don't take any action against the couple on their own. They just create problems within the realm of their possibilities. We put everyone into the system, but in a sense we ourselves represent a system that doesn't allow people to do what they believe they have to do.

In the film – and I can say this without revealing the end – things get to be too much to handle. Bruno has to take care of Rosa, and he definitely reaches certain limits as a result.

GERHARD ERTL:

Well, some insurmountable physical and mental limits are reached, but that's when personal decisions must be made, ones that every individual must be permitted to make for themselves. And we show that.

SABINE HIEBLER:

It's just an extreme situation where different standards apply. One in which a person doesn't necessarily want to be judged according to society's norms. So when the apartment's filthy or stinks because something else is more important, and when an outsider enters the home situation, it's obvious that their view differs from how you see it yourself. That's why Bruno and Rosa close themselves off from the outside world, and this isolation leads to other problems.

GERHARD ERTL:

This is about the standard you use for yourself. And that doesn't have to be this institutional one, in the sense of "quality assurance," or when you have to take your pills or whatever. You can create your own personal world in which you solve the problem in a slightly different way. As a kind of freedom. A personal way of coming to terms with a situation, even an extreme one, simply represents high quality of life.

In terms of putting old age on film: What was your approach?

SABINE HIEBLER:

In retrospect, I'd have to say that we were lucky. In the four years that we worked on the material, society's view of aging has undergone a big change. At first, except for the usual clichés there was hardly anything in the way of visual material or photographs on the theme. Now you can say that it's booming. The elderly target group has a media presence. We realized from the very beginning that we wanted to depict wrinkles and the external signs of aging as a specific quality, that we wanted to show skin as a landscape. We knew that was the objective, but we didn't know how to do it yet. It was extremely difficult at first, and then our cinematographer, Wolfgang Thaler, got involved. He has an extremely emotional and gentle camera, and right from the start he totally understood what we wanted to do, and put a lot of effort into it.

GERHARD ERTL:

In addition, he loves people, and the elderly in particular. The actors notice that, and you can see it in his images. An important aspect when staging old age is revealing the clichés that are around every corner while creating a filmic image that corresponds to the significantly altered realities in society. When you deal with the theme these days, you have to face up to these changes. We wanted COMING OF AGE to be a modern film about old age.

SABINE HIEBLER:

In spite of all that, you still feel that old age is an unknown planet, an unexplored continent, and people like to dismiss it in that way. People want to avoid dealing with it for as long as possible. That might be why it tends not to be explored. We wanted to bring the theme out of that dark corner. Into the light. And dust it off.

Lust, passion at an advanced age: That must not be easy to stage, is it?

SABINE HIEBLER:

Shooting sex scenes is always difficult, at every age. But it was obvious to everyone involved: This is a love story, and physical love is a part of it, and we didn't want to leave that out.

My last question: Your past as filmmakers is interesting, as you have focused mainly on experimental film. And Karl Merkatz comes from the completely opposite direction, for example Bockerer and the "Echter Wiener." Why are such collaborations or encounters easier these days? Or aren't they easy at all, and your film's a real exception? In the '70s that would have been unthinkable, leaving the popular or commercial domain. That's a little sad with a number of domestic stars: the fact that a Karl Merkatz couldn't get a role like this until now.

SABINE HIEBLER:

Yes, a lot's happening in that direction. We normally work with found footage, and the Austrian film scene likes to mention its diversity – and that diversity really exists. It just has to be reshuffled.

BIOGRAPHIES





KARL MERKATZ - BRUNO

After studying at Salzburg's Mozarteum, Karl Merkatz spent 20 years working in Germany: at the Schauspielhaus and the Thalia-Theater in Hamburg, the Staatliche Schauspielbühnen Berlin under Boy Gobert, and Munich's Kammerspiele and Volkstheater. In Vienna Merkatz became famous for his appearances at Theater in der Josefstadt and the Volkstheater. He was the celebrated star of an acclaimed production of Anatevka at Klagenfurt's Landestheater, which was also put on at Theater an der Wien. Thanks to the two television series Ein echter Wiener geht nicht unter and Der Spritzen-Karli and the film Der Bockerer, Merkatz is now familiar to millions.

In 2005 the Salzburg Festival engaged him as the Bettler and Lieber Gott for Jedermann, and during the same season for a part in Ottokar, which he also performed at Vienna's Burgtheater.

A film sequel to Echter Wiener, made for the 80th birthday of the character that made Merkatz famous, Mundl, was a major success.

Merkatz has received both the Russian Film Award and Germany's Filmband in Gold award.



CHRISTINE OSTERMAYER - ROSA

Vienna native Christine Ostermayer first appeared on the stage at the young age of seven, at Grete Reinhart's Children's Theater, and when 16 she began studying at Vienna's renowned Max Reinhardt Seminar. Ostermayer debuted as Juliet in a production of Romeo and Juliet at the Städtische Bühnen in Essen, Germany. She has also appeared in Munich, Berlin, Düsseldorf, Zurich, Salzburg, Vienna, etc.

From 1963 to 1984 Ostermayer was a member of the ensemble at the Bayerisches Staatsschauspiel in Munich, acted at Vienna's Theater in der Josefstadt from 1988 to 1993, and has been at the Volkstheater in Munich since 1994. She has appeared in numerous productions for both cinema and television, such as Pfarrer Braun, Winzerkönig, Tatort, Bulle von Tölz and Alle meine Töchter.

At present Ostermayer can be seen at Theater in der Josefstadt with Otto Schenk in Ralph und Carol – Noch einmal verliebt.

Ostermayer has been awarded the Kainz Medaille and the Nestroy Ring.



ERNI MANGOLD - HERTA

After studying at the Theaterschule Helmut Kraus, Erni Mangold was engaged at Vienna's Theater in der Josefstadt from 1946 to 1956, from 1955 to 1963 under Gustaf Gründgens at the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg, and then at the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus under Karlheinz Stroux. In addition to various engagements in Vienna and Germany, Mangold has worked at Salzburg's Mozarteum since 1972, and was a professor at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna from 1984 to 1995.

At present, she is appearing at Theater in der Josefstadt as well as Vienna's Volksoper and Volkstheater. In addition to her theater work Mangold, who was born in Austria in 1927, has also appeared in numerous films. One of the best known is O. W. Fischer's *Hanussen* (1955), and others include Franz Antel's *Sie nannten ihn Krambambuli* (1972), Richard Linklater's *Before Sunrise* (1995) and Philipp Stölzl's *Nordwand* (2006).



BRANKO SAMAROVSKI - KARL

At the age of five Branko Samarovski fled his home country, Yugoslavia, with his parents, and they settled in Mondsee, Upper Austria. When he was 14, Samarovski began an apprenticeship as a mechanic in Salzburg. At the age of 20 he began acting in an amateur theater group. Samarovski took private lessons, then studied at Salzburg's Mozarteum, later graduating. Samarovski appeared in the film *Der junge Mönch* by Herbert Achtembusch in 1978, and then in numerous television and cinematic productions, including several films by Michael Haneke, most recently *The White Ribbon* (2009).

His initial successes on the stage were at the Schauspielhaus Graz and in Darmstadt, Germany. Samarovski appeared at Germany's Schauspielhaus Bochum and Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz in Berlin. He has worked with such greats as Peter Stein, George Tabori, Andrea Breth, Claus Peymann and Jürgen Gosch. Since 1991 Samarovski has been engaged at Vienna's Burgtheater.

BEHIND THE CAMERA

SABINE HIEBLER

GERHARD ERTL

DIRECTORS AND SCRIPTWRITERS

Sabine Hiebler and Gerhard Ertl have worked together since studying at Linz's Academy of Artistic and Industrial Design.

They have written the screenplays for and produced internationally acclaimed experimental films: Schönberg, Crossover, Crossover 2, Position Simultan, Livingroom, Definitely Sanctus, General Motors, Spot-Check, Prost, Komakino and Transcoder (Understanding Lydia).

Their collaborations have also been shown at numerous exhibitions, such as the Ars Electronica, the Theseustempel/Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and Paris' Biennale de l'image.

In 2002 Hiebler and Ertl made their first fiction feature, Nogo, featuring Jürgen Vogel, Jasmin Tabatabai, Meret Becker, Oliver Korittke, Mavie Hörbiger, et al. This film was invited to film festivals around the world, such as Berlin, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sidney, Rotterdam and London, and it received numerous awards, including the Variety Critics' Choice and the Diagonale award for Innovative Production.

Hiebler and Ertl also received the state of Upper Austria's culture award for film and the state of Lower Austria's young artist's award for media art.





NGF (GEYRHALTER, GLASER, KITZBERGER, WIDERHOFER) FILMPRODUKTION

After NGF Filmproduktion was founded by Nikolaus Geyrhalter in 1994, Markus Glaser, Michael Kitzberger and Wolfgang Widerhofer joined in 2003 as partners. NGF produces documentaries and fiction films for cinematic release and quality documentaries and series for television.

After 15 years of producing documentaries exclusively, including such internationally acclaimed films as Geyrhalter's *Our Daily Bread* (2005), NGF completed its first fiction feature in 2010: *The Robber* by Benjamin Heisenberg debuted in Competition at the 60th Berlinale.

In 2011 the company's second fiction film, Michael, Markus Schleinzer's debut, was shown in Competition at the Official Selection of the Cannes Film Festival.

