





# LE GRAND CAHIER

Directed by  
**János Szász**

Screenplay by  
**János Szász,  
Andras Szeker  
Agota Kristof**

Producer  
**Sandor Söth  
Pal Sandor**

production  
**Hunnia Filmstudio / Intuit Pictures**

In coproduction with  
**Amour Fou and Dolce Vita Films,**  
supported by by **Magyar Filmalap Zrt., MDM, MBB, MEDIA, Eurimages, Wiener  
Filmfund, CNC, DFFF, FISA, MEDIA Programme**

**Based on Agota Kritóf's famous and bestselling novel**  
© Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1986

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## CAST

László Gyémánt  
András Gyémánt  
Piroska Molnár  
Ulrich Thomsen  
Ulrich Matthes  
Gyöngyver Bogнар  
Orsolya Tóth

Egyik Iker / One  
Masik Iker / Other  
Nagyanya / Grandmother  
Tiszt / Officer  
Apa / Father  
Anya / Mother  
Nyulszaj / Hairlip

## CREW

Director  
Screenwriter  
Director of photography  
Costume designer  
Music director  
Editor  
Executive producers

Coproducers

Producers

János Szász  
Andras Szekér, János Szász  
Christian Berger  
János Breckl  
Johan Johanson  
Szilvia Ruszev  
Albert Kitzler, György Such, János Szász  
Amour Fou Filmproduktion, Dolce Vita Films  
Sandor Söth, Pál Sandor

## TECHNICAL DETAILS

Format : HD/ 35 mm  
Genre : War drama  
Running Time : 109 min  
Shooting Language : Hungarian/German

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## PRESS NOTES

LE GRAND CAHIER is the adaptation of the worldwide bestseller by the Hungarian born Swiss author Agota Kristof. Edition du Seuil first published the novel "Le Grand Cahier" in 1986© Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1986. The book, written in French, became a huge success overnight. It has been translated into over thirty languages and was awarded as "Livre European", the European prize for French literature. It also won the 2001 Gottfried Keller Award in Switzerland and the Austrian State Prize for European Literature in 2008.

LE GRAND CAHIER is a postmodern antiwar drama, an oppressive parable about what war does to children and intensely describes the misery of entire populations in Eastern countries. Cinematography is in the hands of Academy Award-nominee Christian Berger (THE WHITE RIBBON, CACHE) and starring Ulrich Thomsen (THE CELEBRATION, IN A BETTER WORLD, THE INTERNATIONAL), Ulrich Matthes (DOWNFALL) and Orsolya Tóth (WOMEN WITHOUT MEN). Producers are Intuit Pictures in co-production with Hunnia Filmstudio, Amour Fou and Dolce Vita Films, financed by Magyar Filmalap Zrt., Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung, Medienbord Berlin Brandenburg, Eurimages, Deutscher Filmförderfonds, MEDIA Programme, Wiener Filmfund, CNC, and FISA.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

Towards the end of World War II, people in big cities are at the mercy of air raids and death by starvation. A desperate young mother leaves her 13-year-old twin sons at their grandmother's house in the country, despite the fact that this grandmother is a cruel and bestial alcoholic. The villagers call her "the Witch" because she is rumored to have poisoned her husband long ago. Previously pampered, the twins must learn how to survive alone in their new, rural surroundings. They realize that the only way to cope with the absurd and inhumane world of adults and war is to become completely unfeeling and merciless. By learning to free themselves from hunger, pain and emotion, they will be able to endure future hardships. So they begin their own series of studies: they fortify their spirits by reading the Bible and learning foreign languages. They practice every day to harden their bodies and minds. They hold their hands over flames, cut their legs, arms and chests with a knife and pour alcohol right on their wounds. They desensitize themselves to insults and learn to ignore the more insidious appeals of sentiment and love. The twins keep a written record of all they have witnessed during the war, Le Grand Cahier. When they write, they follow their own strict code: The prose must be free from emotion, the notes precise and objective. Over time they are initiated into the corruptions and horrors of a war-torn world. They have to listen to a lecherous priest's hypocritical avowals of faith, they watch soldiers herd refugees to their death and witness the selfish cruelties their neighbors inflict on one another. As the war ends, the "Liberation" brings the worst moments of all: their village and their few relationships are plagued by rape and suicide. Their mother returns for a brief, gruesome reunion and their father follows suit in a final tableau involving patricide and opportunism, leading to the twin's ultimate separation.

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## **DIRECTOR'S NOTE by János Szász**

LE GRAND CAHIER is a war film with no war, a story about innocent but cruel children who resist all morals. It is the story of early adolescent, murderous twin boys. Two bodies, one spirit; two bodies, one will. They speak the same way and they finish each other's sentences, always on the same wavelength. One boy thinks of something and the other carries it through. When they kill, it is an act of justice. Two bodies and one soul.

## **PRODUCER'S NOTE by Sandor Söth**

LE GRAND CAHIER is world literature, but nevertheless the project was quite demanding. In 2006, when I tried to buy the rights, they had just been sold the day before to Constantin Film. Then, in 2009, as the rights were free again, my favorite director János Szász and I could convince Agota Kristof to assign us the rights. Highly important was the early support by Media Programme, Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung and the Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg. With this tremendous book we had no problems convincing a great cast and partners from Hungary, France and Austria to join this challenging project.

## **CAST**

### **ULRICH THOMSEN**

Thomsen was born in Fyn, Denmark and graduated from the Danish National School of Theatre and Contemporary Dance in 1993, after which playing on several theatres in Copenhagen, such as Dr. Dantes Aveny, Mungo Park and Østre Gasværks Teater.

His film debut was in 1994 in NIGHTWATCH directed by Ole Bornedal. Since then a number of roles in, among others, Thomas Vinterberg's THE BIGGEST HEROES (1996), Susanne Bier's Sekten (1997) and Anders Thomas Jensen's Flickering Lights (2000). The major breakthrough in his career came in the 1998 film THE CELEBRATION followed by an important role in the James Bond film THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH(1999) portraying the part of henchman Sasha Davidov. This established Thomsen as an international actor, famous outside his native Denmark. He also played a part in the 2002 English film KILLING ME SOFTLY.

2011	Season of the Witch
2010	The Silence
2009	Duplicity
2009	The International
2009	Lulu and Jimi
2008	Fear Me Not
2008	The Broken
2007	Opium: Diary of a Madwoman

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2006	The Rocket Post
2005	Allegro
2004	Sergeant Pepper
2002	Killing Me Softly
2001	Mike Bassett: England Manager
2001	The Zookeeper
1999	The World Is Not Enough
1998	The Celebration
1997	Sekten
1996	Portland
1994	Nightwatch

### PIROSKA MOLNÁR

2013	Le Grand Cahier
2012	Tüskevár
2012	Aglaja
2012	Birdsong
2011	Utolsó rapszódia
2011	ZooKids - Mentsük meg az Állatkertet!
2010	The Pillars of the Earth
2009	Szuperbojz
2008	Tabló
2007	Dolina
2006	Taxidermia
2005	Fateless
2003	A Pál utcai fiúk
2002	Capital
1999	Hippolyt
1997	Gypsy Lore
1987	Laura
1982	Faustus doktor boldogságos pokoljárása (TV mini-series)

### ULRICH MATTHES

Is one of the German voices of Kenneth Branagh, he is the most popular and the only one used for more than one film. 2005 he was voted "Actor of the Year" by 'Theater heute' magazine for his performance in Edward Albees' WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOLF?. He played a Nazi in DOWNFALL (2004) and a Holocaust victim in THE NINTH DAY (2004).

2013	Le Grand Cahier
2012	Kunduz: The Incident at Hadji Ghafur
2011	Calm at Sea
2010	Neue Vahr Süd
2008	The Bill

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2008	Novemberchild
2004	Downfall
2004	The Ninth Day
2000	The Farewell
1999	Aimée & Jaguar
1998	Fire Rider
1997	Winter Sleepers

## CREW

### DIRECTOR'S PROFILE

János Szász was born in 1958. He is a tutor for the acting master class at the Academy of Theatre and Film Arts, Budapest. His films include WOYZECK, which won the European Film Award for Best New European Film, amongst others, and THE WITMAN BOYS (*Un Certain Regard*, Cannes 1997). He also won Best Director at the Moscow International Film Festival and a special commendation at the Sundance Festival and by Variety in 1998. His recent film OPIUM with Ulrich Thomsen was produced by Andras Hamori.

2011	Le Grand Cahier
2007	Opium: Diary of a Madwoman 1983
2000	Eyes of the Holocaust
1998	Temetés
1997	The Witman Boys
1994	Woyzeck
1990	Don't Disturb!
1987	Utóirat
1985	A léderer-ügy
1984	Escorial

### PRODUCER'S PROFILE

2012	The Door (Dir.:Istvan Szabo)
2006	Crusade in Jeans (Dir. Ben Sombogaard)
2004	Ne fais pas ca! (Dir. Luc Bondy)
2003	The Tulse Luper Suitcases 1-3 (Dir. Peter Greenaway)

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Beta Cinema's portfolio includes outstanding productions like Berlin 2013 Golden Bear-winning CHILD'S POSE, Academy Award 2011-nominated IN DARKNESS, Cannes 2008 Jury Prize-winning and Academy Award-nominated IL DIVO, Academy Award 2007-winning THE COUNTERFEITERS, Academy Award 2007 nominated MONGOL, Academy Award 2006-winning THE LIVES OF OTHERS and the Academy Award 2004-nominated DOWNFALL.

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