

# PRESSBOOK

Beta Cinema presents

A production of **Zodiac Pictures**  
in co-production with **Claussen+Putz Filmproduktion**  
**Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen** and **Blue+**

# GOLDEN YEARS

**A film by Barbara Kulcsar**  
**Written by Petra Volpe**

Switzerland/Germany 2022, 92 min

Starring  
**Esther Gensch**  
**Stefan Kurt**  
**Ueli Jäggi**

## **International Press**

Evelyn Holzendorf, [evelyn.holzendorf@betacinema.com](mailto:evelyn.holzendorf@betacinema.com), phone +49 89 673469740

## **World Sales**

Beta Cinema GmbH, Gruenwalder Weg 28 d, 82041 Oberhaching / Munich, Germany  
[www.betacinema.com](http://www.betacinema.com)

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## CAST & CREW

Alice	ESTHER GEMSCH
Peter	STEFAN KURT
Heinz	UELI JÄGGI
Michi	GUNDI ELLERT
Susanne	ISABELLE BARTH
Julian	MARTIN VISCHER
Ingrid	TERESA HARDER
Josef	ANDRÉ JUNG
Magalie	ELVIRA PLÜSS
Claude	MONICA BUDDE
Monique	CINZIA MORANDI

Directed by	BARBARA KULCSAR
Written by	PETRA VOLPE
Producers	LUKAS HOBI, RETO SCHAERLI
Co-Producers	JAKOB CLAUSSEN, ULI PUTZ
Director of Photography	TOBIAS DENGLER
Set Design	MIRJAM ZIMMERMANN
Costume Design	LINDA HARPER
Make-Up	JEAN COTTER
Editing	WOLFGANG WEIGL
Casting	CORINNA GLAUS, NORA LEIBUNDGUT
Music by	CARSTEN MEYER
Direct Sound	PATRICK STORCK
Sound Design	MANU GERBER
Production Manager	SARAH BOSSARD

## TECHNICAL DATA

Switzerland, Germany 2022  
92 min, 1:2.35, Sound 5.1  
Shot on Arri Alexa

## LOGLINE & SYNOPSIS

Newly retired, Alice and her husband Peter are ready to finally enjoy their life as pensioners. But their pent-up marital problems bubble to the surface on a cruise trip through the Mediterranean. The spouses end up going on separate journeys of self-discovery, both finding unexpected ways to spend their golden years.

### Synopsis

Free at last! Alice and Peter are celebrating their retirement – and with it, a new phase in their lives. But when her best friend Magalie dies unexpectedly, Alice makes a shocking discovery: She has had a secret affair in France, for 15 years no less! Confronted with the finite nature of life, Peter is thrown into an existential crisis. To bon-vivant Alice's great chagrin, he becomes a health fanatic. And when Peter invites Magalie's widowed husband Heinz to join them on a cruise, which Alice had hoped would breathe new life into their marriage, their harmonious retirement is over. On the high seas, Peter only spends time with Heinz. Disappointed and hurt, Alice decides not to return to the ship during a shore excursion in Marseille. Instead, she sets out to find Magalie's lover. On their separate paths, Alice and Peter eventually find not only themselves, but also a new way to spend their golden years.

*Barbara Kulcsar ("The Two of Us", "Blush") directs from a screenplay by Petra Volpe ("Heidi", "The Divine Order"), skillfully balancing drama and comedy in an affectionate story of an elderly couple in search of happiness. With her portrayal of Alice, Esther Gemsch succeeds wonderfully in taking the audience on her universal journey between conventions and an individual lifestyle, inspiring us to align ourselves more with our individual needs.*



*Esther Gemsch, Stefan Kurt*

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

by **Barbara Kulcsar**

GOLDEN YEARS tells a universal love story at its core. The issues of their joint life plans and ideas ultimately culminate in the question of how love can still work after many years of marriage. With their retirement, our protagonists Alice and Peter realize that the usual patterns no longer apply. Alice is confident that how she imagines this new phase of her life will fit Peter as well. But Peter suddenly doesn't go along with it the way he used to. Both have to face the world with new candor to figure out how they want to live out their golden years. They realize that it's never too late to take control of one's life. And they manage to let go of each other without losing their love for one another.



*Stefan Kurt, Esther Gemsch*

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

### **The Beginning**

GOLDEN YEARS is based on the personal history of screenwriter Petra Volpe. When her parents retired a few years ago, it triggered strong emotions in Volpe and her parents. Her parents' lives were so dictated by their work rhythm, how would they deal with all that freedom and spare time? What would they do, as individuals, as well as, as a couple? These are the questions that concerned the writer, and wound up becoming GOLDEN YEARS: As a funny, moving and inspiring story about aging and family.

The award-winning Swiss writer started off working with Reto Schaerli and Lukas Hobi of Zodiac Pictures. The threesome have known each other for years and are very close. Their paths crossed for the first time on Volpe's 2009 TV film "Frühling im Herbst" (Spring in Fall). Volpe's theatrical debut TRAUMLAND ("Dreamland", 2013) followed, which received four nominations at the 2014 Swiss Film Prize. In 2015, Petra Volpe wrote the screenplay to the successful reboot of film classic HEIDI, and had her breakout hit 2017 with Swiss box office hit THE DIVINE ORDER, for which she not only wrote the script, but also directed. The film won numerous awards, including the 2017 Swiss Film Prize for best screenplay and Zurich Film Prize. Volpe contributed the idea and screenplay to TV miniseries "Frieden" ("Peace", 2020).

The producing duo values Petra Volpe's writing for the way she touches people with her stories. "The screenplay for GOLDEN YEARS does that as well". It tells a story, which works across social class lines, because it picks up a universal theme, deals with it with the necessary dose of humor, and makes you think," said Reto Schaerli and Lukas Hobi. They emphasize that "Petra always manages to be authentic and genuine in her screenplays and with her multifaceted characters."

### **The Journey Begins**

The first discussion between Petra Volpe and her producers about their next project took place after they wrapped THE DIVINE ORDER. After they figured out the theme – retirement and marriage, conventional or individualistic lifestyles – a long screenwriting journey began, as so often with theatrical films. With Barbara Kulcsar, the project gained another creative head, who accompanied Volpe on her path to the final draft, and would go on to direct her story. Since her breakout debut hit ZU ZWEIT ("The Two of Us", 2010), which won the Zurich Film Prize, Barbara Kulcsar has been one of the leading and most successful female Swiss filmmakers, along with Volpe, who have made a name for themselves internationally.

GOLDEN YEARS is their first creative collaboration. Kulcsar always focuses on human relations in her films, on finely-detailed characters and an equally nuanced approach to directing. The Zodiac Pictures producers knew the director from her work on "Nebelgrind" 2012, which dealt

with the theme of Alzheimer's. The combination of Petra Volpe and Barbara Kulcsar was very promising to them. "On 'Nebelgrind', Barbara showed she had a knack for portraying difficult themes in an accessible and funny way. So she was the ideal candidate to direct GOLDEN YEARS and wonderful supplement to Petra."

### **The Production Sets Sail**

Financing GOLDEN YEARS was not easy. Development was funded by the Swiss Federal Culture Office BAK as well as Zurich Film Fund, but not the production. "We thought we could finance this comedy from Switzerland and send it on the worldwide festival and film market tour," said the producers. After both big Swiss film funds passed on production funding, they had to reevaluate and think out of the box. "It's still a big challenge to make a good Swiss theatrical comedy," Schaerli and Hobi say.

Zodiac Pictures were able to persuade their long-term partners, veteran Munich production shingle Claussen+Putz to co-produce, with whom they co-produced box office hits like HEIDI (2015) or the adaptations of children's writer Otfried Preussler THE LITTLE GHOST (2013), THE LITTLE WITCH (2018) and most recently THE ROBBER HOTZENPLOTZ (2022). Claussen+Putz brought German pubcaster ZDF aboard, while Swiss pubcaster SRF, its mother ship SRG SSR as well as Blue+ were on board from the get-go. Further funding came from the Aargau Kuratorium, the German FFA, Suissimage and the Canton Lucerne.

### **The Creative Team**

After the financing was closed, the next step was to get the right creative team on board. Petra Volpe and Barbara Kulcsar assembled a team of pros they knew from prior productions. Barbara Kulcsar had been in touch intensively with set designer Mirjam Zimmermann long before shooting GOLDEN YEARS, "because we had learned that kind of long-term exchange is immensely valuable on earlier projects," the director said. Volpe and Kulcsar also have a long history with DoP Tobias Dengler, costume designer Linda Harper, and make-up artist Jean Cotter. "It's great to have such close relationships. Certain processes just work without a lot of discussion," they sum up.

The visual concept reflects the story's universal appeal: Thanks to the cruise ship motif and locations in Southern France, the film transcends the small world of Switzerland, expanding the characters' horizon both internally and externally, exposing them to new sensory input. "A large-than-life feel and a sense of playfulness in the set design was key as far as the visual style goes," say Lukas Hobi and Reto Schaerli. "The interiors are colorful, as are the costumes."

The cinematography underscores the humor with carefully composed images. "In the beginning, the characters are trapped in their lives and their ideas. They move in the little boxes they've created for themselves, and these boxes are represented by the framing. At the

beginning, the film is fairly classically composed, the images are symmetrical. When Alice and Peter go aboard ship, the open sea lies before them, and it's not clear in which direction their life is steering. After that, the camera takes their subjective perspective, the visuals become more dynamic and mobile," the director said.

## **The Shoot**

Not only the shoot in Southern France, in and around Marseille, but also the cruise ship shoot held quite a few adventures for the team. "It was hard enough to find a cruise ship to shoot on during the pandemic. During Covid, that was a real headache," the producers recall. They finally found a good partner with Italian cruise line Costa Crociere, who owned the Costa Smeralda, where the crew was able to shoot for a week – during regular operations!

Due to the Covid restrictions, there were fewer passengers aboard than usual, which was an advantage of the production. "A cruise liner is a world of its own, with or without Covid, so it's an adventurous place to film. We were often told: You can shoot for an hour at Location A, and then a half an hour at Location B, which was usually clear on the other side of the ship. It was frantic. It takes about an hour to move all the equipment from Location A to Location B," the producers commented, grinning.

Along with the cruise ship and Marseille, GOLDEN YEARS also shot in Zürich and Tessin. Principal photography was set for 31 days, from late August to early October 2021. "We had wonderful weather – which was really lucky for the film. We would've had rainstorms if we had shot on the ship a week earlier," the director said. "The luck we had with the weather only let us down once, in Marseille, where we got robbed. The camera and sound equipment was all gone. We were spinning wheels for a half a day, and couldn't do anything for a few hours, until we could replace the equipment," the producers said.

Overall, Reto Schaerli and Lukas Hobi have positive memories of the shoot. The cast and crew could hardly have been better, they recall. "We had our dream team with Esther Gemsch and Stefan Kurt – as well as the supporting talent around Ueli Jäggi and Gundi Ellert. And shooting shipboard was an incredible experience."





*Esther Gemsch, Stefan Kurt*

### **Parting Wishes...**

GOLDEN YEARS appeals to a broad, adult audience with a spot-on mixture of entertainment and depth. The producers are proud of the finished product: “The film has wonderful magic.”

The producers hope GOLDEN YEARS will reach as large an audience as possible, especially among the classic arthouse audience over 50, which hasn’t really come back to theatres since Covid, and which they hope will turn out. But of course GOLDEN YEARS isn’t just a film for Golden Agers, but for the whole family. “We think it’s the most fun for kids to watch with their parents, who may be the same age as our leads, Alice and Peter.”

## **INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA KULCSAR**

**What is it that fascinated you about the story by Petra Volpe? What made you want to direct it?**

GOLDEN YEARS is just a wonderful love story. I love a great love story! Especially the getting to know phase, which this screenplay handles marvelously. The tonality of Petra's story captivated me. Its bittersweet mixture of comedy and drama just hit home with me. GOLDEN YEARS is really a classical dramedy, a *comédie humaine*. I loved the fact we had a female lead over 65. Still, the story is a very universal one. GOLDEN YEARS is a story with universal appeal, which asks how love works, how it can work. You don't have to be a pensioner to relate to that. Every long-term relationship eventually faces questions of differing life plans and philosophies. What GOLDEN YEARS transports so well is the fact it's never too late to take control of your own life when you notice you're stuck in a rut that's not working anymore. I really like the solution Petra found for her characters. The fact it's not black & white, together or apart, is what makes it a story worth telling. To me, that's real love – to be able to let each other go without losing each other. That's just wonderful!

**This is your first time working with Petra Volpe. What do you like about her?**

When I signed up to direct, we began communicating intensely, discussing and polishing the final draft together. Petra was still doing all the writing. She let me take over when we started rolling. She didn't get back involved again until we started editing, which makes total sense to me, because editing is like a second screenwriting process. That's when you can give the story one last once-over and make sure it all works. It was a really productive collaboration. What I love about Petra is her wealth of ideas, her love of her characters, her openness and willingness to continually question and revise her story throughout the production process, and as well as her ability to let go of her story when it's time and let others take it away.

**What was important to you characterizing the romantic leads Peter and Alice?**

It was very important to take them both seriously with all their wants and needs. Since GOLDEN YEARS is a comedy, it was important to strike the balance of laughing with the character or laughing about the character – and how we laugh at the character when we do. I wanted all the characters to remain relatable. Peter's health craze is a good example. It shouldn't belittle Peter. We don't want to audience to make fun of him, but smile at him lovingly, as we watch him barking up the wrong tree.

**How would you characterize Alice?**

Alice can really get on your nerves. Everything has to be just so. She raised the kids working par-time alongside her husband in a classic modern arrangement, calling the shots at home for decades. When she retired, a new desire awakened, making her a longing and curious searcher on one hand, and an annoying know-it-all on the other, who's convinced whatever she wants for this new stage in her life, her husband Peter must want too. When Peter hits retirement as well, she realizes she isn't used to and can't handle the fact her husband isn't playing along like he always did – much less that he has his own wants and desires, that she maybe doesn't even know about. As the story unfolds, she has to face the fact things are slipping from her hands. For the first time in her life, Alice starts acting on gut instinct, managing to confront the world with a new openness and figure out how she wants to spend her golden years.

### **And Peter?**

Peter is an easy-going guy who likes his peace and quiet and abhors change, with a good dose of stubbornness. He worked for the same company all his life, always pulling his weight, but leaving their family life to his wife to run. Until he retired, he didn't even realize how little he ever thought about what he really wants out of life. First his retirement, then Magalie's sudden death, shake him up and he starts to ask himself how he wants to spend the rest of his life. Peter and Alice are on a collision course: Peter starts thinking about what he really wants, when Alice realize he's slipping from her control. Both of them realize it can't go on like this.

### **Was it a challenge to strike a balance between funny and serious overtones while directing the actors?**

I love to play around with variations, rehearsing a scene with various moods and tonalities, and like to shoot several versions of key scenes and emotional beats, a serious version and a light-hearted one, for example. As soon as we start doing table reads and talking to the talent, we try and pinpoint those story beats. I take that extra time on set to be able to vary tonalities in the editing room and find the right mood. Sometimes you can feel that different reactions are possible, but you can't figure out which is right until you're assembling the final montage in the editing room, to see how many laughs or tears a certain scene needs. One example: After Peter has deflected Alice's come-on in the ship cabin and flees into the bathroom, she steps out on the balcony. We shot several versions of that scene: One where she's crying, one when where she almost starts to cry, and one where she's just sad. In the edit, we chose the latter version, because the others were just too heavy for the mood. It was crucial to me to be able to tweak the mood until the very end and strike the right balance as far as comedy goes.

### **What makes Stefan Kurt and Esther Gemsch the right choice for Peter and Alice?**

When I was asked to direct, Stefan Kurt was already cast, and I was thrilled. How can you not be thrilled about Stefan Kurt? We still had to cast Alice. We had several ideas, and one of them was Esther Gemsch. I loved the idea because I'd already shot the series "Der Bestatter" (The Undertaker) with Esther. Since Stefan Kurt was already cast, we could play off him while casting. The point was whether you believed them as a couple, whether we feel their 40 years of marriage. Especially as concerns the female lead Alice, I really wanted a multi-faceted female character, with whom we can laugh and cry, who takes the audience along on her journey, with all her rough edges. And I can't imagine anyone better than Esther Gemsch! Live casting is fantastic, especially when it's not your own script. That's when I really internalize the script and find out a lot of things about the characters, discover new facets with the actors that aren't in the script, things the actors contribute. The directing process doesn't start on set for me. Casting is actually the beginning of directing, to me.

**This is your third shoot with Tobias Dengler as DoP. How did you develop your cinematic style? What was important to you visually?**

We watched a lot of films together, paying attention to color scheme, camera movements, humor and tonality. Humor is very crucial for this film. We talked about how to amplify the gentle sense of humor of the story visually. In the scene where Alice spots Peter and Heinz on the ship's deck, reading one and the same book. Or when the two men bike up a mountain dressed the same way... The inspiration we took from those conversations were then channeled in a concrete direction when we started location scouting – and when we found our locations. The locations naturally shape the visuals and frame the scenes. Tobias and I worked closely with set designer Mirjam Zimmermann on location scouting. I usually work very closely with the set designers, but especially on this film, because we wanted to think about how much humor we can transport visually.

**Carsten Meyer wrote the score. What was your musical concept?**

I knew exactly what we were looking for in the way of a score. I was familiar with Carsten's work and knew he was perfect for our score. So I asked him and he agreed, to my great joy. Our co-producer Jakob Claussen put his finger on what we were looking for in a score. When I told him Carsten was on board, he said, "That's great, his music is so *"frizzante"*! I wanted to transport a vacation feeling with the score, warmth, soul, a breath of fresh air. The score had to gel with the cruise ship mood, which is an old-folks' shuffleboard world, so we wanted a score that harks back to yesteryear without being old-fashioned and stodgy. I made a playlist early on, to capture the right mood for the film, with songs I like. I gave that playlist to Carsten and my DoP Tobias Dengler, and also some of my actors. I told them, This is what I want the film to feel like! Without actually verbalizing it. "Frizzante" sums it up beautifully!

**Aside from locations in Switzerland and France, you also shot on a cruise ship. What was that like?**

Very interesting! We were filming on an actual cruise. The passengers became our extras – except for five Swiss couples we took along. The passengers had a lot of fun, and even thanked us afterward! It was interesting for the film crew, too, being penned up together for a week. It felt like a class field trip! Of course we weren't allowed to leave ship due to Covid restrictions, and we had to shoot every day anyway. I love the locations the ship offered me. There's always something grotesque about them. It was great to work there. Sure it was stressful, too, we were racing from one side of the ship to the other and didn't have a lot of time at the various sets, because we couldn't obstruct the shipboard operations. One thing that came in handy was the fact there were less passengers than usual aboard due to Covid. One of the nicest things about shooting aboard ship was always seeing the ocean, and the memorable sunrises and sunsets.

**GOLDEN YEARS is a film that lives off its older actors. Are there enough roles for older actors? Studies point to age discrimination against mature actors...**

That's certainly an issue. And it's important to do something about it. There are a lot of exciting stories with mature protagonists of a certain age, and we should tell them! But I didn't accept this project because the leads are 65+, but because it was a great script. It was very important to me to have natural actors, not plastic-surgery victims trying to fend off aging. I wanted to show the actors as naturally as possible in their roles, and just loved watching their wonderful faces.



*Ueli Jäggi, Barbara Kulcsar, Esther Gemsch, Stefan Kurt*

## IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA

### Esther Gemsch (Alice)

Esther Gemsch was born 1956 in Berne and started acting on stage, where she still appears regularly, including at *Schauspielhaus* Zürich. She had her screen debut 1977 in Belgian film RUE HAUTE, followed by starring roles in KLEINE FRIEREN AUCH IM SOMMER (“Young Ones Are Even Cold in the Summer“, 1978) directed by Peter von Gunten, as well as TV movie “Eiskalte Vögel“ (“Ice-Cold Birds“). In 1983 she starred in Peter F. Bringmanns musical THE HEARTBREAKERS as well as in CHAPITEAU (1983) by Johannes Flütsch. Her breakout role came in soap “Lüthi and Blanc“, which premiered in October 1999 on Swiss TV, airing for 8 seasons and 288 episodes. Numerous roles on Swiss TV followed, including several episodes of “Tatort“ (“Scene of the Crime“) and “Haus ohne Fenster“ (Windowless House), which earned her a Swiss Film prize nomination 2004.

Her theatrical film roles include TELL (2007) by Mike Eschmann or Peter Luisi’s UNLIKELY HEROES (2014). She most recently starred in series “Die Bestatter“ (The Undertaker“), on which she worked with Barbara Kulcsar, and in “Scene of the Crime – Little Princes“, directed by Markus Welter. Along with film, TV and stage acting, Esther Gemsch also does voice acting for film, TV, commercials and dubbing.

### Stefan Kurt (Peter)

After training to be a school teacher, the Swiss native attended the Berne Conservatory of Theater and Music, before moving to Jürgen Flimm’s Thalia Theater in Hamburg where he met Robert Wilson, who had great influence on Kurt’s artistic development (“Black Rider“, “Alice“, “Time Rocker“).

In the mid-1990s Kurt took on TV and theatrical film roles. TV miniseries “Der Schattenmann“ (“The Shadowman“) directed by Dieter Wedel was Stefan Kurt’s breakout role, earining him the Adolf-Grimme-Prize 1997 as well as the Telestar. He again won the Adolf-Grimme-Prize 1998 for his role in prize-winning crime drama “Gegen Ende der Nacht“ (“The End of the Night“) by Oliver Storz. Further roles followed, including Chris Kraus’ drama FOUR MINUTES (2006), Justus von Dohnányis black theatrical comedy BIS ZUM ELLENBOGEN (“Up to the Elbows“, 2007), Dani Levy’s MY FÜHRER (2006), Margarethe von Trotta’s TV movie “Die andere Frau“ (“The Other Woman“), JULIA’S DISAPPEARANCE (2009) by Christoph Schaub and in THE FOSTER BOY (2011) by Markus Imboden.

Kurt’s major TV roles include Alain Gsponer’s Martin Suter adaptation “The Last Weynfeldt“, the „Dreileben“ trilogy directed by Dominik Graf, Christian Petzold and Christoph Hochhäusler (for which he received the German Acting Prize 2012), Alain Gsponer’s “One Step to Freedom“

and Dani Levys “Der Liebling des Himmels“. Kurt worked with Petra Volpe on her theatrical film TRAUMLAND (2013) and series “Frieden“ (“Peace”), written by Volpe.

After playing the role of Pettersson in PETERSSON AND FINDUS: THE BEST CHRISTMAS EVER (2016) and PETERSSON AND FINDUS: FINDUS MOVES HOUSE (2018), Stefan Kurt starred in Justus von Dohnányi’s DESASTER (2015), Wolfgang Becker’s ME AND KAMINSKI (2015), Swiss films MR. MOLL AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY (2017) and THE REFORMER: ZWINGLI (2019) as well as Bernd Böhlich’s East German drama SEALED LIPS (2019). He was the Captain in the hit musical I’VE NEVER BEEN TO NEW YORK (2019). TV audiences most recently saw him in “Legal Affairs“ directed by Randa Chahoud and Stefan Bühling, or Sebastian Kos’ “Ostfriesensühne“. Among his most recent big-screen turns are Frauke Finsterwalder’s SISI & ME (2022).

In 2006, Stefan Kurt also began working as photographer and artist: [www.stefankurt.com](http://www.stefankurt.com)

### **Ueli Jäggi (Heinz)**

Born in Olten, Switzerland in 1954, Ueli Jäggi majored in German and Romance literature, and History, before studying acting in Zürich at the Drama Academy. He got his first stage roles at the *Theater der Jugend* in Munich and at the Nuremberg State Theater Nürnberg, followed by turns at the *Schauspielhaus* in Hamburg and the *Volksbühne* on Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz in Berlin. In the ‘90s, he appeared at Theater Basel, where he met Christoph Marthaler, with whom he began a long-term collaboration.

Ueli Jäggi has appeared in TV and theatrical films, including SENNENTUNTSCHI: CURSE OF THE ALPS (2010) directed by Michael Steiner, “Die Akte Grüninger“ directed by Alain Gsponer (2014), LIEBE AND ZUFALL (2014) directed by Fredi Murer, and THE REFORMER: ZWINGLI (2019) directed by Stefan Haupt. In 2020, we played the part of sawmill owner Mulliger in the second season of series “Wilder“ on SRF. Most recently, he starred in Markus Fischer’s mystery drama DIE SCHWARZE SPINNE (2021), as well as comedy DA KOMMT NOCH WAS (2022) directed by Mareille Klein.

In 2001, we was voted actor of the year, in 2004 and 2006, he received the German Audiobook Award for his readings of Melville’s “Bartleby, the Scrivener“ and Gogol’s “Diary of a Madman“. From 2008 until 2021, he voiced the part of Chief Detective Xaver Finkbeiner in the SWR/ARD “Scene of the Crime“ radio plays. He also voices Inspector Hunkeler in the audio versions of Hansjörg Schneider’s Hunkeler detective novels. His audio plays as “Private Detective Musil“, and as Police Lieutenant Linder, have a diehard fan base.

He also directs for the stage.

## **Gundi Ellert (Michi)**

Gundi Ellert, born in Lengenfeld, in 1951, has acted on all major German-language stages. She was an ensemble member of the Munich *Kammerspiele*, run by Frank Baumbauer, as well as the Bavarian State Theater, the Hamburg *Schauspielhaus* and the Berlin *Schaubühne*. She has worked with Ingmar Bergmann, Hans Lietzau, Frank Castorf, Cesare Levi, Thomas Ostermayer, Jossi Wieler, Luk Perceval, Johan Simons, and René Pollesch.

Along with her stage acting career, she has also acted in theatrical & TV films. She had her first TV role in "Direktion City" in 1980, followed by successful series like "Die schnelle Gerdi", „Der Bulle von Tölz“, „Die Affäre Semmeling“, several episodes of "Der Alte", "Die Hausmeisterin", "Café Meineid" and the "Schwarzach" films. One of her most famous roles was in "Zwei Allein" along with Elmar Wepper, directed by Stephan Wagner. On the big screen, she had supporting roles in THE MURDER FARM (2009) directed by Bettina Oberli, THE UNHEARD WOMAN (2016) directed by Hans Steinbichler and most recently Nana Neuls DAUGHTERS (2021).



## **BEHIND THE CAMERA**

### **Barbara Kulcsar (Director)**

Barbara Kulcsar, born in Zurich in 1971, attended drama school in Budapest, began studying Spanish literature in Barcelona, studied sociology, journalism and film studies for a few semesters at Zurich University before completing her film studies at the Zurich University of the Arts. Her graduation film *BLUSH* won several awards, and the feature film *THE TWO OF US* won the Zurich Film Prize. Several television works followed: *Nebelgrind* and *Kursverlust*, both of which were nominated for the 3sat audience award and ran in competition at the Baden-Baden television film festival. Kulcsar was finally honored at the renowned festival in 2017 for *Zwiespalt*. Further television work has been placed in her hands: three episodes of the Swiss series *Der Bestatter*, one episode of the German crime series *Tödliche Geheimnisse*, and meanwhile two episodes of Germany's most popular crime movie cycle, *Tatort*.

### **Petra Volpe (Screenplay)**

Screenwriter and director Petra Volpe grew up in Suhr, Switzerland, and studied at Konrad Wolf Film School in Potsdam-Babelsberg. Her theatrical debut *DREAMLAND* (2013) was released in Swiss theaters in Spring of 2014 after a successful festival tour, and was nominated for four Swiss Film Prizes. In 2017, Petra Volpe scored a worldwide hit with *THE DIVINE ORDER*, which sold 340,000 tickets at the Swiss box office alone, the top Swiss film of 2017. It screened at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York, and won the Nora Ephron Award, and the Audience Award, and was sold to numerous territories. In addition, *THE DIVINE ORDER* also won the Swiss Film Prize for Best Screenplay, and was the Swiss entry for the 90th Academy Awards. Volpe also wrote the screenplay to *HEIDI*, which sold 3.5 million tickets worldwide, as well as the teleplay for SRF series "Frieden". She has also worked as writer and director in the USA, for Fox Searchlight and Disney, among others. She is currently working on US prison drama *FRANK & LOUIS* with Laurence Fishburne and Clifton Collins Jr. Petra Volpe lives and works in Berlin and New York.

### **Lukas Hobi & Reto Schaerli (Producers)**

Lukas Hobi and Reto Schaerli head indie production co. Zodiac Pictures, based in Zürich and Lucerne. True to their company motto of always thinking outside the box, Zodiac is active in Switzerland and Europe. Their biggest hits include *READY, STEADY, CHARLIE!* (2003), the biggest Swiss box-office hit in years. In 2013, they released the sequel *READY, STEADY, OMMM!* in Swiss theaters.

Michael Schaerer's drama about four teens battling cancer BOLD HEROES (2010) won the Audience Award at the Zurich Film Festival, the Student Jury Award at the Max Ophüls Film Festival and a Bernhard Wicki Prize.

In 2013, Zodiac Pictures produced Petra Volpe's episode film DREAMLAND, about different people's paths crossing on Christmas Eve in Zürich. In the same year, Lukas Hobi and Reto Schaerli also produced Otfried Preussler adaptation THE LITTLE GHOST (2013) with Jakob Claussen and Uli Putz. The Swiss and German production houses repeated their successful collaboration on Alain Gsponer's reboot of HEIDI (2015), which won the German Film Prize as Best Children's Film, as well as the Preussler adaptations THE LITTLE WITCH (2018) and THE ROBBER HOTZENPLOTZ (2022), which will be released for Christmas.

Zodiac also produces the renowned Swiss "Scene of the Crime" episodes in Lucerne and Zürich. In 2016, Zodiac led the international co-production effort on Urs Egger's international coproduction GOTTHARD about the spectacular construction of the Gotthard Tunnel under the Alps. Their recent productions include Petra Volpe's comedy THE DIVINE ORDER (2017), which won three Swiss Film Prizes and was nominated for the Oscars 2018 as Best Foreign Film. Bettina Oberli's family drama MY WONDERFUL WANDA (2020) and Michael Steiner's AND TOMORROW WE WILL BE DEAD, which opened the Zurich Film Festival 2020 and 2021. Zodiac most recently landed a hit with TV mini-series "Frieden" on Swiss TV SRF (2020), as well as drama series "Neumatt" (2021), which was picked up by Netflix for international.

### **Jakob Claussen & Uli Putz (Co-Producers)**

Claussen+Wöbke+Putz Film Production GmbH grew out of Claussen+Wöbke Filmproduktion, which was founded by Jakob Claussen and Thomas Wöbke 1992. In 2004, their managing and line producer Uli Putz became a partner, manager and producer. They have been known as Claussen+Putz Film Production since 2015.

Since it was founded, the production shingle found and promoted many talented young directors, such as Hans-Christian Schmid with IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE (1995), 23 – NICHTS IST SO, WIE ES SCHEINT (1998) and CRAZY (2000), Marco Kreuzpaintner, who directed SUMMER STORM (2004), TRADE (2007) and Otfried Preussler adaptation KRABAT (2008), as well as Caroline Link: Jakob Claussen and Thomas Wöbke won the Producer's Prize of the Bavarian Film Prize for her hit debut BEYOND SILENCE (1996), which was also nominated for an Oscar as Best Foreign Film. Jakob Claussen and Uli Putz also won the Bavarian Film Prize Producer's Prize for Hans-Christian Schmid's LIGHTS (2003). Stefan Ruzowitzky's ANATOMIE was the top German film 2000, spinning off a successful sequel 2003.

Together with director Alain Gsponer, Jakob Claussen and Uli Putz brought Otfried Preussler adaptation THE LITTLE GHOST (2013) and Johanna Spyri adaptation HEIDI (2015) to the big screen (both co-produced with Zodiac Pictures). HEIDI won the German Film Prize, among

other awards. Swiss director Michael Schaerer staged another Preussler adaptation for Claussen+Wöbke+Putz with Zodiac Pictures, THE LITTLE WITCH (2017), which sold 1.7 million tickets at the box office.

Claussen+Putz produced Giulio Ricciarelli's drama LABYRINTH OF LIES (2014), which was nominated for the German Film Prize as Best Film 2015. Star Alexander Fehling won the Bavarian Film Prize as Best Actor 2015.

In the Summer of 2017, their literary adaptation "Zuckersand" won the Bernd Burgemeister TV Prize at the Munich Filmfest. In 2020, they produced Bjarne Mädel's lauded directing debut "Sörensen hat Angst", which won the Austrian film prize Romy and five Grimme Prizes. They most recently line-produced the series "Biohackers" for Netflix.