

MADONNEN FILM PRESENTS

MR BACHMANN

AND



Berlinale
 71st Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Competition

A FILM BY MARIA SPETH



A MADONNEN FILM PRODUCTION WITH DIETER BACHMANN, AYNUR BAL, ÖNDER CAVDAR AND THE STUDENTS OF CLASS 6B AND 6F CINEMATOGRAPHY AND SCRIPT REINHOLD VORSCHNEIDER ORIGINAL SOUND OLIVER GÜBEL
MIXING ADRIAN BAUMEISTER SOUND DESIGN NIKLAS KAMMERTÖNS LINE PRODUCER BRIGIT MULDER'S WRITTEN DIRECTED EDITED AND PRODUCED BY MARIA SPETH INTERNATIONAL SALES FILMS BOUTIQUE

MadonnenFilm

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MR BACHMANN AND HIS CLASS

(Herr Bachmann und seine Klasse)

A FILM BY
MARIA SPETH

2021 - GERMANY - DOCUMENTARY - 217'



THE FILM

SYNOPSIS

MR BACHMANN AND HIS CLASS is an intimate documentary portraying the bond between an elementary school teacher and his students. His unconventional methods clash with the complex social and cultural realities of the provincial German industrial town they live in.

THE CONTEXT

Teacher Bachmann and his class 6b. A group consisting of 12- to 14-year-olds. The introductory year to a comprehensive school. Vastly different levels of aptitude within a single class, to be selected into different scholastic paths at the end of the year. They are a colorful mix of pupils from 9 countries. An aggregation of very different cultures as one result of globalizing world. The school makes clear what society expects of the children: achievement. The students are mostly concerned with managing this challenge, with reactions ranging from pride or arrogance to anxiety or a feeling of inferiority. What's at stake is the formation of their identity as individual personalities. But equally of their gender roles or their national or cultural identifications. All on a background of truly big questions: What can school realistically achieve under such conditions? Are ethnic dividing lines identical to those of selection by academic performance? Can school help to prevent exclusion and marginalization? Mr. Bachmann has been working as



a teacher in this social minefield for seventeen years. His type of teaching gives highly unusual answers to these questions. He is an ex-revolutionary, a drop-out, a folk singer, a sculptor. His highest goal is to transmit to every single child that it is valuable, that it is somebody rather than nothing. Everybody has abilities.

Mr. Bachmann teaches at Georg-Büchner-Gesamtschule in Stadtallendorf, North Hesse. The cultural make-up of his class reflects the population mix of the town. There are roughly 21.000 people. 25% don't have German citizenship, 70% have an immigration background. About 5.000 inhabitants are Muslim. Stadtallendorf is a small town with a large industrial base. The iron foundry Fritz Winter was founded in 1951 and today supplies 2.800 jobs. In 1956, Ferrero established its biggest plant worldwide here with 3.400 employees. The first foreign workers arrived in the early Sixties, first from Italy and Greece, starting in 1963 also from Turkey. But the town's history of employing foreign workers goes back even further to the Nazi Regime. During WW II, Stadtallendorf was the biggest European production site for arms and munitions. The major part of the workforce was not there voluntarily. Many were forced laborers from the sub-concentration camp Münchmühle.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Dieter Bachmann and I have known each other for decades. After he had started to work in Stadtallendorf as a teacher, he kept telling me for years about this town and the students of Georg Büchner School, and how I should really take a look myself.

Approaching this town deep in the German hinterland from one of the surrounding hills, you see a silhouette of fuming factory chimneys in the haze over the plain. From afar, it looks like one big industrial complex, surrounded by blocks of housing on one side and an old timber-framed village on the other.

Driving through town, you see roadside signs. They point to a DAG and a WASAG, a „Documentation and information Center“, a “Intermediary Deposit for TNT contaminated soil“. Between them, older buildings whose low roofs are overgrown with greenery. Gnarly pines. Young birches. Brushwood. Inquiring into the history of these traces, one finds that Allendorf was a small farming village until 1938, when the Nazi Regime built the biggest production plant for explosives.

Leaving your car on the main street, you smell a mix of metal and hazelnut cream. Since the factories for explosives were not destroyed in the war, new industries moved to



Stadtallendorf during the post-war Economic Miracle. The foundry Fritz Winter and the Ferrero chocolate factory became the new center of the town.

By visiting Dieter Bachmann in his class, you will experience a teacher who builds a personal, emotional rapport with his students. Someone who does not merely impart knowledge but who involves his full personality with all his weaknesses and strengths. Someone who has no taboos and engages his students without prejudice. Not in the service of political correctness but as lived, emotional openness without any hidden resentment. He creates an open atmosphere without fear in which his students feel safe, where they can show themselves and develop. School becomes their living room, a trusted space where they can talk about anything they have on their minds. With a teacher who in conversation challenges, provokes, encourages, strengthens, promotes solidarity and empathy. Someone who knows that strengthening self-worth can be more important than the Pythagorean theorem. Someone who throws all his abilities in the balance so non-academic skills can develop as well. Juggling. Shaping stone. Building tables. Dancing. Making music. Important activities to foster communication among the students and help overcome social, cultural, and linguistic barriers.

The point of departure for this project wasn't a thesis about the reality of the Federal Republic as an immigration country or the presentation of an alternative pedagogic model, but the open-ended observation and the unprejudiced encounter with these people.



My love for these children germinated during the shoot but fully unfolded only during the edit. A love that was encouraged through their direct emotional openness and their emergent potential. Children who because of their age still hadn't developed techniques of dissimulation and because of their backgrounds no techniques of self-presentation. In a certain sense, this love became a leitmotif for my editing work.

The children in Bachmann's class mostly have an industrial working class background, independently of their Turkish, Russian, Bulgarian or German roots. One can rightly say that their lives are precarious, their opportunities for education and social advancement are limited. But just as Teacher Bachmann offers these young people a chance to develop skills, beauty, and dignity, I wanted to give them the same in my edit: to be stars for 217 minutes.

Mr. Bachmann would like to add a few things:

"It was a snowy winter's day when I first crossed the school yard of Georg Büchner School. And it hit me somewhat unprepared. I knew this is not really where I wanted to be. No! Rap music blared from somewhere, everything was in commotion and ran and shouted.

From a distance, I saw two young boys take my measure. "Hey, who are you looking for? What are you doing here? " They laughed, not unkindly. "Well, hm: I think I am supposed to become a teacher here," I joked.



The boys 'eyes widened: "Oh yes! Then you should become our teacher! What's your name? " I almost replied "Dieter", but managed to say: "I am Mr. Bachmann! ", and they took my hand and brought me to the school administration office.
And so, Teacher Bachmann was born!"

"I often ask myself, how I ended up becoming a teacher. I think the students at Georg Büchner Comprehensive in Stadtallendorf showed me unmistakably what kind of teacher they wanted: one who feeds them apples and cereal and doner kebab, who plays soccer with them, makes music, draws; someone who deciphers with them what the world looks like and what there is to discover; someone they can ask whatever they want, but most of all someone who doesn't put them down with grades and their own faults... They want a teacher who is as happy to go to school as they are, with whom they can laugh and sing and scream; someone who also puts them back on track when fists fly, or they insult queer or handicapped people. At its core it really is a perfectly normal relationship between children or youths and an adult, with an attitude of: I know you can do this, that is something you better not do, this is out of bounds, but I trust you, I know you have it in you, I like you."

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Maria Speth is a writer, director, and producer of features and documentaries. Her graduate thesis film and debut feature **THE DAYS BETWEEN** premiered at the Rotterdam International Film Festival in 2001, where it won the VPRO Tiger Award. It was also honored with the Grand Jury Award at the Créteil International Women's Film Festival and the MFG-Star Award for emerging directors in Germany in 2001.



Her second feature **MADONNAS** (D 2007) won the Hessian Film Prize in 2007. The lead actress Sandra Hüller won the "Silver Astor" award for best actress at the Festival Internacional de Cine in Mar del Plata.

In 2009, Maria Speth founded Madonnen Film and produced her first documentary, **9 LIVES**, which she wrote, directed, and edited, and for which she received the DEFA Foundation Award at the 2010 International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film. In 2011, she was awarded the Incentive Prize for Film and Media Arts from the Academy of Arts in Berlin. In 2012, Maria received the German Metropolis Award as best director of a documentary.

Her feature **DAUGHTERS** (D 2014) premiered at the Berlinale and was released theatrically in Germany. In 2015, Maria received script development funding from the German National Film Fund FFA for her project **STADT ALLEN DORF** that she shot as **MR. BACHMAN AND HIS CLASS** until July 2017. **Mr Bachmann** will be released theatrically in Germany by Grandfilm following its premiere at Berlinale 2021.

She is currently working on a feature film **FOR KATE** her project **ONE LIVES BECAUSE ONE IS BORN**, both supported with funds through the German Federal Government.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2015-2021 **MR BACHMANN AND HIS CLASS** *(documentary 217 min.)*
Production: Madonnen Film
Writer, director, editor, producer
- 2019-2020 **ONE LIVES BECAUSE ONE IS BORN** *(feature)*
Script development funded by the Federal Commission of Culture and Media (BKM)
- 2016-2017 **FOR KATE** *(feature)*
Screenplay funded by the German National Film Fund (FFA)
- 2012-2014 **DAUGHTERS** *(feature, 92 min.)*
Production: Madonnen Film
Writer, director, editor, producer
- 2009-2010 **9 LIVES** *(documentary, 105 min.)*
Production: Madonnen Film
Writer, director, editor, producer
- 2004-2007 **MADONNAS** *(feature, 125 min.)*
Production: Pandora Film
Writer, director, editor
- 2000-2001 **THE DAYS BETWEEN** *(feature, 119 min.)*
Production: November Film
Writer, director
- 1999 **BAREFOOT** *(short, 20 min.)*
Production: HFF Potsdam-Babelsberg
Writer, director

CREW

Director	Maria Speth
Script	Maria Speth, Reinhold Vorschneider
Director of Photography	Reinhold Vorschneider
Production management	Brigit Mulders
Original Sound	Oliver Göbel
Sound Mix	Adrian Baumeister
Sound Design	Niklas Kammertöns
Editing	Maria Speth
Produced by	Maria Speth
Production Company	Madonnen Film GmbH

A MADONNEN FILM PRODUCTION WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF **DIETER BACHMANN,**
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