



CELESTE CID
MAX RIEMELT
BENJAMIN SADLER

MY GERMAN FRIEND

A FILM BY JEANINE MEERAPFEL





TECHNICAL DETAILS

35mm | 1:1,85 | Dolby Digital | 100 min | Spanish/German

A Malena Filmproduktion production,

in co-production with Ricardo Freixá, Geißendörfer Film- und Fernsehproduktion and WDR.

Funded by Film und Medienstiftung NRW, HessenInvestFilm, Deutscher Filmförderfonds, BKM, FFA, Instituto Nacional de Cine y Arte (INCAA)



CAST

Sulamit	Celeste Cid
Friedrich	Max Riemelt
Michael	Benjamin Sadler
Ida Löwenstein	Noemí Frenkel
Philipp Löwenstein	Jean-Pierre Noher
Frau Burg	Katja Alemann
Herr Burg	Carlos Kaspar
Eduardo	Daniel Fanego
Sulamit as a child	Julieta Vetrano
Friedrich as a child	Juan Franciso Rey
Aunt Else	Adriana Aizenberg

CREDITS

Written and directed by	Jeanine Meerapfel
Produced by	Jeanine Meerapfel
Co-produced by	Hans W. Geißendörfer
Co-producer Argentina	Ricardo Freixá
Executive producer	Paul Müller
Cinematography	Víctor Kino González
Production Design	Federico Mayol, Alexander Scherer
Costume Design	Connie Balduzzi, Lucia Faust
Make-up	Waldemar Pokromski, Sabine Schumann
Editing	Andrea Wenzler
Sound	Victor Tendler, Michael Busch,
Music	Floros Floridis



SYNOPSIS

In her latest feature film, Jeanine Meerapfel tells the story of a deep love in a time of political upheaval and historical change. Sulamit, the daughter of Jewish emigrants from Germany, is growing up in Buenos Aires in the 1950s. Living cheek by jowl are Jews and Nazis who have fled from Europe and been thrown together again in a foreign country. As a young girl Sulamit meets Friedrich, a young German boy, whose family lives in the house directly opposite. They quickly become close. When Friedrich learns that his father was a high-ranking officer in the SS, he breaks with his family and goes to Germany. He soon joins the German student movement. Sulamit follows him a few years later. But she realises that he is so politically engaged that there is little room for their love. Sulamit studies, later working as a translator and starts up a relationship with Michael, an assistant at the university, who loves and helps her. But it is with Friedrich that her heart lies. When Friedrich leaves Germany to join an Argentinian guerrilla movement, they lose contact and he disappears without trace. Sulamit embarks on a search that takes her up to Patagonia.



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PRESS RELEASE

In her new film *My German Friend* Jeanine Meerapfel uses striking images to express a radical love, a love which has first has to find its bearings between Germany and Argentina, between the political and the personal, between memories and the future. Meerapfel digs deep into the German past and tells a tale of the paradox of romantic love in the face of collective guilt.

It is against the magnificent backdrop of Patagonia that Jeanine Meerapfel sets this vagrant love, a love which must first rid itself of the ghosts of the past. Imaginative cinematography, great actors and a penetrating look at the forces of the past make *My German Friend* visually stunning cinema dealing in grand emotions.

MAX RIEMELT

Max Riemelt was born on January 7, 1984 in East-Berlin and ranks among the premier league of German actors. Many national and international awards mark Max Riemelt out as an exceptionally interesting character actor.

Max Riemelt made his television debut in 1997 in a supporting role in the two-part series *Eine Familie zum Küssen*. He became more widely known in 1998 when he took the leading role in Matthias Steurer's thirteen-part series *Zwei Allein*. Early in his career, he combined further television roles with appearances in feature films like Dennis Gansel's coming-of-age comedy *Girls on Top*. Major roles in episodes of successful German series such as *Alarm für Cobra 11* or *Wolff's Turf* then followed. Max Riemelt finally made his breakthrough in 2004 in Dennis Gansel's drama *Before the Fall – Napola* and he received the award for Best Actor at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. European Film Promotion named him as a Shooting Star at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2005 and in the same year he received the Rising Star Award at Hamptons International Film Festival.

In the course of his career Max Riemelt has already appeared alongside renowned actors like Moritz Bleibtreu, Uwe Ochsenknecht and Jürgen Vogel. Many well-known directors have supported the Berlin actor in his artistic development. Dominik Graf directed Max Riemelt in the leading role of the romantic drama *The Red*

Cockatoo, for which he received the Bavarian Film Award for Best Young Actor. Max Riemelt took a leading role in Dennis Gansel's remake of *The Wave* (2008), the second most successful German film of the year with around 2.6 million viewers.

Other successful productions include *13 Semesters*, as well as criminal series *In The Face of the Crime*, for which Max Riemelt received the German Television Award in 2010. This successful screen actor has also appeared in numerous independent productions and student films such as *Urban Explorer*.





CELESTE CID

Celeste Cid was born on January 19, 1984 in Argentina, and is one of the country's most successful and exciting actors. Following her studies in singing, drama and literature, Celeste Cid soon became very well known from appearing in critically acclaimed TV series like *Televisión por la Identidad* (2007), *Oportunidades* (2008) and in particular *Para vestir santos* (2010). Celeste Cid had already proved her talent as an actor in various plays (including *Hipólito y Fedra* directed by renowned theatre director Alejandro Ullúa) and a number of films. In Mariano Mucci's successful 2009 film, *Motivos para no enamorarse* (*Reasons For Not Falling in Love*), she plays a young telephonist who enters into a relationship with an older man. Her authenticity and intensity have won her many awards including the Jury Award at the Málaga Film Festival. The Argentinean has also proved she has great talent behind the camera. Her 2008 short *Limbo*, received numerous awards.



BENJAMIN SADLER

The son of a German graphic designer and a British teacher came into this world on February 12, 1971, in Toronto. Benjamin Sadler spent the first five years of his life in Canada, before arriving in Germany with his family in 1976. Sadler studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. His acting career began in 1994 with appearances in well-known series like *Wolff's Turf* and *SK Babies*. Early film roles soon followed, such as *A Sordid Affair*, and *Die Rache des Balthasar*, as well as roles in numerous television films. In 2002 Benjamin Sadler played alongside the likes of Joseph Fiennes and Sir Peter Ustinov in the international production *Luther*. Over the course of his career, he has appeared in films such as *Dresden*, *Der Untergang der Pamir* and *A Light in Dark Places*. In November 2007 the two-part series *Contergan*, a documentary about the victims of Thalidomide, was shown on ARD in which he portrayed a father affected by the tragedy who was also a prosecuting lawyer.

For his role in the film *War and Peace* (2008) Sadler and his fellow actors Katharina Wackernagel and Denise Marko received the Special Jury Award at the Bambi. He was acclaimed for his role as Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach in the

family chronicle *Krupp – A Family between War and Peace*, which won the 2009 Readers' Choice Award at the Bambi. Most recently Benjamin Sadler has been in Andres Veiel's film *If Not Us, Who?* which was in competition at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2011.



DIRECTOR'S COMMENT

What parts of this story are autobiographical? It is well known that many German Nazis fled to South America after the war. It is also known that many German Jews emigrated there before or during the war to safeguard their lives. What has rarely been dealt with up till now is how these two groups of people, who emigrated to Argentina within a few years of each other, and who came from the same German cultural circles, were able to get on with each other and how they reacted to each other. It is an irony of history that the German Jews and the German Nazis in Argentina favoured similar places to live, had similar tastes in architecture, and chose similar places to holiday. Much of the narrative in the film is based on real events. The autobiographical element is that I grew up the daughter of German-Jewish emigrants in the 1950s in a suburb of Buenos Aires similar to the one in the screenplay, and a German family lived in the house opposite. I got to know lots of young Germans at that time. Some of them, as I later found out, were the children of prominent Nazis. Also autobiographical are the anti-Semitic attacks of my student days in Argentina, and the incredulity of young German interlocutors that I myself encountered in Germany when I informed them that I was of Jewish descent. In the '68-era I was a student in Ulm and Berlin. During this period I met German men of my age who were almost fanatical in their attempts to destroy the image of their fathers. Young men who were so ashamed of the atrocities of the Nazi period that they hid their German passports when they went abroad

and blindly and recklessly committed themselves to extremist left-wing groups. Young men who had a long road ahead (if they survived their acts of fury) before they were capable of loving themselves – and then of loving others. I followed the period of military dictatorship in Argentina while I was in Germany. Cases of young Germans being abducted in Argentina at that time are well known (Klaus Zieschank, being one). I know the details of the horrors at that time from friends who were abducted, then taken to prison but who survived.

The love story between Sulamit and Friedrich is invented but, as we know, the invented and the unconscious are also autobiographical.

This film is my declaration of love to Argentina, the country that welcomed my family into safety, but also to the Germans of my generation who dragged themselves out of the morass of guilt and self-hate, and in so doing have helped to give today's society a humane face. The love between Sulamit and Friedrich could equally be the love between a Palestinian and an Israeli, or a Catholic and a Muslim: a love which is fortunately stronger than the differences of our origins and heritage.

Berlin, January 2011

Jeanine Meerapfel



JEANINE MEERAPFEL

Jeanine Meerapfel was born in Argentina in 1943, attended Journalism College in Buenos Aires, and then worked in Argentina as an editor and journalist.

From 1964 to 1968 she studied under Alexander Kluge and Edgar Reitz at the Institute for Film at the Ulm Academy of Design, having been one of the first women to be enrolled there. Until the end of the 1970s she continued working as a freelance journalist, and gave film seminars in Ulm and at the Goethe Institute in various countries. In 1980 she made her first feature film, *Malou*, which won the international film critics award FIPRESCI in Cannes and received top awards at the San Sebastián and Chicago film festivals. This was followed in 1981 by the documentary *In The Country of my Parents*. Her next documentary *Die Kümmeltürkin geht (Melek Leaves)* won the Interfilm Prize of the Ecumenical Jury and the German Film Critics Award at the Berlin International Film Festival. In her 1987 feature film *Days to Remember*, Jeanine Meerapfel tells the story of the young generation of guest workers trying to find their true home, torn between their parents' homeland and the place they have spent their childhood.

Between 1986 and 1989 she worked on the documentary *Desembarcos (When Memory Speaks)*, dealing with the time of military dictatorship in Argentina, for which she received the City of Strasbourg Award and the El caimán barbudo award at the Havana Film Festival in 1990. In 1988 Jeanine Meerapfel also completed *La Amiga* with Liv Ullmann in the leading role.

A wealth of awards and nominations followed for this film: The German Film Award 1989, award for Best Actress at the San Sebastián Film Festival, the OCIC award in Havana 1988. *La Amiga* was nominated as the Argentinean submission for the Oscars.

In 1990 Jeanine Meerapfel became professor in Film/Television at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne. In 1995 she completed work on the feature film *Amigomía*, for which she received the Saarland Screenplay award. Her filmmaking was recognised with the North-Rhine Westphalian Female Artists Award in 2000. In 2001 came *Annas Sommer (Anna's Summer)*, with Angela Molina and Herbert Knaup in the leading roles, which received the Special Mention Award at the Argentinean Mar del Plata film festival. In the documentary *Fictional lies on right occasions* (2003), Jeanine Meerapfel profiles the two Greek musicians Floros Floridis and Babis Papadopoulos. In 2007 Jeanine Meerapfel made the documentary *Mosconi – o a quién le pertenece el mundo (Mosconi – or to whom the world belongs)*, in which she follows the fight for survival of a north-Argentinian town affected by privatisation. In 2008, good!movies brought out a DVD Edition featuring nearly all of Jeanine Meerapfel's films. In 2012 at the International Film Festival Innsbruck she received the honorary award for the body of her work. *My German Friend* has been nominated for the Hessen-Best Film Award.

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