

# OUR LITTLE DIFFERENCES

A FILM BY SYLVIE MICHEL





## **WORLD SALES**

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## SYNOPSIS

Sebastian is a successful doctor who lives the good life. He has an easy-going relationship with his son Arthur. At least, that's how he sees it. His cleaner Jana takes a very different approach. To the doctor's amusement, she's a control freak when it comes to her daughter Vera. And Jana, for her part, can only shake her head at how much freedom Arthur enjoys. One evening the youngsters go out together. Without Jana's consent. The following morning when Jana finds out and realises that Arthur and Vera haven't come home, she panics. Sebastian's attempts to calm her have the opposite effect. Beside herself, and provoked by Sebastian's indifference, Jana can hold back no longer and all their differences erupt. Things come to a head. But their children's disappearance remains a mystery that has to be solved.

Sylvie Michel's direction is sensitive and delicate. She shows these two people whom so much unites, but who are unable to reach out to each other. Carefully observed and told with great feeling *Our Little Differences* is a tense psychological drama about a deeply riven community.



## THE STORY

A specialist in the field of IVF, Sebastian is very much in demand. The successful doctor runs a clinic, is well liked by his female patients and colleagues, and sees himself as open-minded, liberal and tolerant. A true do-gooder, as it were, who came into this world to save it. He would prefer to have very little to do with the upbringing of his 17-year-old son, and would rather be his best buddy. That all works out fine until his ex-wife Siggi decides to go abroad for several months, leaving him to look after their offspring. In his late 40s, he tries to manage his life of socialising in high society, the clinic and his attractive young girlfriend, not wanting to let his mask slip nor for anyone to find out that all is not perfect in his world. He sees himself as charming and trendy and that's how others see him too. It is only his son who finds him too conservative and bourgeois. As a specialist in artificial insemination, Sebastian is also a popular talk-show guest. He is invited to take part in a discussion on a local TV channel to talk about his work and the miracles that he brings about as a doctor. On the evening of the recording he makes a detour after leaving the clinic to make sure everything is all right at home. In his large detached house on the outskirts of Berlin he finds Arthur, Arthur's girlfriend Julia and Vera. Vera is his Bulgarian cleaner's pretty and intelligent daughter who has recen-

tly arrived in Germany to study. Until she has got everything sorted out she is helping her mother. Sebastian is to pass on a message to Vera from her mother who also cleans at the clinic, to wait at his house. Unlike Sebastian she doesn't believe in anti-authoritarian upbringing and wants to know Vera's every move. Sebastian chats away with Vera until time starts running short and he has to get ready for the programme. When he comes back, Vera has gone, and instead he finds her overwrought mother in his sitting room. Grinning, his pubescent son explains that he plans to go out with the two girls and that Vera has already gone on ahead with Julia. Although Sebastian is not thrilled by this development, he tries to calm Jana and tells her to enjoy her evening and to loosen her grip on her daughter, especially given she is over eighteen. While the young ones are out having fun Sebastian's television appearance does not go to plan, as a celebrity philosopher steals the show. Rather than going home after this draining discussion Sebastian decides to spend the night with his attractive girlfriend. When he arrives at his clinic the next morning, looking forward to an action-packed day at work, he is met with some bad news. Jana is completely overwrought because her daughter has not returned from her night out with his son. Although Sebastian is unable to get hold

of Arthur, he is convinced that everything is absolutely fine. He suspects that the youngsters are asleep, comatose, at his house. Having tried in vain to calm Jana, he sends her home. Sebastian tries to regain his composure and dedicates himself to his patients, but a call from Jana once again disturbs his flow. Without telling him, she has gone into his house to make sure everything is all right and to look for her daughter. Furious at his cleaner's impertinence, Sebastian drops everything and heads home. Due to Sebastian's relaxed attitude towards the teenagers and his ever more apparent social and cultural arrogance towards Jana their 'common' search for their children escalates into a real crisis. Doctor-cleaner relations, which up to then had been friendly, develop into a power struggle, looking suspiciously like one between mother and father or man and wife, but further loaded with the differences in their cultural and social backgrounds. Sebastian reaches his limits in this fight, but so too does Jana, who harbours as many prejudices against Sebastian as he against her. Deep down she mistrusts and despises him. The search for their children comes to an abrupt end when a phone conversation with the parents of Arthur's girlfriend explains what has happened. Arthur had suddenly decided not to return to his bourgeois father, but to escape to his mother's

empty house. But there is still no sign of Vera. Sebastian loses patience with the situation, with his distraught housekeeper and his irresponsible son. While Jana is all for calling the police, Sebastian starts to grill the youngsters. Gradually light is shed on the circumstances surrounding Vera's disappearance and the connections become clearer.



## DIRECTOR: SYLVIE MICHEL

Sylvie Michel was born in the south of France and grew up in Paris. Since 1982 she has lived in Berlin, New York and Los Angeles and worked mainly in Script/Continuity for renowned directors such as Wim Wenders, Mika Kaurismäki, Agnieszka Holland and Nana Djordjadze. “Our Little Differences“ is Sylvie Michel’s debut as a feature film director.

## FILMOGRAPHY

### Writer/Director

2009	<b>LOST DOG</b> short
2007	<b>A DAY IN THE COUNTRY</b> short
1994	<b>STAND BACK</b> short (Special Mention, Gijón International Film Festival 1994)
1990	<b>HOCH HINAUS</b> short documentary

### Script Supervisor (selection)

2008	<b>THE PALERMO SHOOTING</b> Director: Wim Wenders
2005	<b>DON'T COME KNOCKING</b> Director: Wim Wenders
2005	<b>MERRY CHRISTMAS</b> Director: Christian Carion
2003	<b>LAND OF PLENTY</b> Director: Wim Wenders
2003	<b>MEIN NAME IST BACH</b> Director: Dominique de Rivaz
2000	<b>MY SWEET HOME</b> Director: Filippos Tsitos
2000	<b>GOLDEN DREAMS</b> Director: Agnieszka Holland
2000	<b>THE MILLION DOLLAR HOTEL</b> Director: Wim Wenders
1996	<b>A CHEF IN LOVE</b> Director: Nana Djordjadze

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

For me parenthood is like a simple scenario in everyday life – a mixture of lightness, seriousness and absurdity. As a parent you sometimes ask yourself, have I done the right thing? Is my child well enough integrated into society to be happy? Have I done my best? We have worked these questions into the screenplay of “Our Little Differences“ and in this extreme situation they become clear and palpable.

In some situations all it takes are small misunderstandings to unleash uncontrollable emotions and bring about irrational conflicts between all concerned, leading to endless arguments about how to bring up children between parents, children, friends and even strangers.

Regardless of the amount of discussion and regulation that takes place, involving parents, social institutions and politicians around bringing up children, there will always be areas which remain beyond control.

“Our Little Differences“ brings together two people who are fundamentally different: SEBASTIAN, an IVF specialist whose patients have difficulty in becoming parents and JANA, his Bulgarian cleaner who has difficulty in letting go of her daughter. This combination of characters gave rise to the following questions while developing the storyline. What exactly do deeply rooted emotional and

cultural attitudes look like, seen both in the native population on the one hand, and in immigrants on the other? And what attitude to ‘the other‘ does this produce? Both through its dramatic structure and its characters, “Our Little Differences“ attempts to find some answers to these questions.

The relationship between Sebastian and Jana starts off friendly and relaxed, but in the face of an imminent loss, or rather a loss of control over their children, all inhibitions disappear and irrationality replaces reason. In the conflict with his cleaner the doctor has to call on all his reserves to fight his way out of the jungle of prejudices and delusions he holds. From fear of seeming politically incorrect, he holds back as much as he is able in his argument with Jana. But Jana herself is full of social resentment and her fear of losing her daughter makes her discard her inhibitions and so articulate this. Sebastian and Jana are poles apart – and yet they are similar in that they each have a warped view of the world. In the end they stand side by side – facing the ruins brought about by deep longings and small mistakes.

## WOLFRAM KOCH as SEBASTIAN

Born in Paris, Wolfram Koch studied at the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts. Alongside numerous television roles Wolfram Koch has above all devoted himself to the theatre. In addition to engagements at the Freie Volksbühne, the Schiller-Theater in Berlin and the Schauspiel Frankfurt, he has appeared at the Volksbühne and the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. He made his film début at the age of 13 – playing the part of Hans in the film adaptation of „Ansichten eines Clowns“/“The Clown“. Numerous film parts followed. In addition to his work as an actor, he is also a much loved audio book reader and radio drama actor.

## FILMOGRAPHIE

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 2012 | <b>OUR LITTLE DIFFERENCES</b><br>Regie: Sylvie Michel             |
| 2011 | <b>SUMMER OUTSIDE</b><br>Regie: Friederike Jehn                   |
| 2010 | <b>THE PATH TO THE PAST</b><br>Regie: Didi Danquart               |
| 2008 | <b>THE COUNTESS</b><br>Regie: Julie Delpy                         |
| 2007 | <b>THE INVENTION OF THE CURRIED SAUSAGE</b><br>Regie: Ulla Wagner |
| 2006 | <b>HANNAH</b><br>Regie: Erika von Möller                          |
| 2002 | <b>OVER NIGHT</b><br>Regie: Horst Krasser                         |
| 1977 | <b>DIE RÜCKKEHR DES ALTEN HERRN</b><br>Regie: Vojtech Jasny       |
| 1975 | <b>THE CLOWN</b><br>Regie: Vojtech Jasny                          |





## BETTINA STUCKY AS JANA

Bettina Stucky was born in Bern. After attending drama school in Bern she had various engagements in Berlin, Kassel, Jena and Wuppertal up until 1998. From 1998 to 2000 she was a member of Stefan Bachmann's theatre ensemble at the Theater Basel and since 2000 has been a member of the ensemble at the Zurich Schauspielhaus. She received the Swiss film award for her film debut in Stina Werenfels' "Meier Marilyn".

## FILMOGRAPHY

- 2012 **OUR LITTLE DIFFERENCES**  
Regie: Sylvie Michel
- 2010 **STATIONSPIRATEN**  
Regie: Mike Schwerer
- 2009 **LIFETIMESHORT**  
Regie: Gesine Dankwart
- 2008 **ROBERT ZIMMERMANN IS TANGLED UP IN LOVE**  
Regie: Leander Haußmann
- 2006 **GOING PRIVATE**  
Regie: Stina Werenfels
- 2003 **MEIER MARILYN**  
Regie: Stina Werenfels

## LEONARD BRUCKMANN AS ARTHUR

Leonard Bruckmann was born in 1993 in Dinslaken and has lived in Berlin since the age of two. He appeared on stage for the first time (at the Tribüne, Berlin) when he was eight years old - as Max in the stage adaptation of Woody Allen's "Mighty Aphrodite". The following year he had his first film role in Christoph Hochhäusler's "In This Very Moment".

## FILMOGRAPHY

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 2011 | <b>OUR LITTLE DIFFERENCES</b><br>Regie: Sylvie Michel      |
| 2002 | <b>IN THIS VERY MOMENT</b><br>Regie: Christoph Hochhäusler |

## ANNE RATTE-POLLE AS MONIKA

Anna Ratte-Polle started off studying at the University of Munster, but soon switched to the Rostock University of Music and Drama. Her first engagements took her onto the stages of the Staatstheater Cottbus, the Volksbühne Berlin and the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus. In 2001 she was awarded the Brandenburg prize for Performing Arts for her roles in Effi Briest and The Marquise of O. In 2001 Anna Ratte-Polle moved to the “Schauspiel“ in Hanover and won over the audience there too. Further appearances at the Deutsches Theater and the Salzburg Festival followed. In addition to her work in the theatre, she also appears on TV and in film. Her film début was in 2000 in Christoph Stark’s Julietta.

## FILMOGRAPHY

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 2012 | <b>OUR LITTLE DIFFERENCES</b><br>Regie: Sylvie Michel   |
| 2007 | <b>LIFETIMESHORT</b><br>Regie: Gesine Dankwart          |
| 2006 | <b>ON THE SAFE SIDE</b><br>Regie: David Dietl           |
| 2004 | <b>WILLENBROCK</b><br>Regie: Andreas Dresen             |
| 2002 | <b>NIGHT SONGS</b><br>Regie: Romuald Karmakar           |
| 2001 | <b>EIN ABEND FÜR DORA</b><br>Regie: Sören Senn          |
| 2000 | <b>EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES</b><br>Regie: Franziska Buch |
| 2000 | <b>JULIETTA</b><br>Regie: Christoph Stark               |

## CAST

Sebastian: Wolfram Koch

Jana: Bettina Stucky

Arthur: Leonhard Bruckmann

Vera: Silvia Petkova

Monika: Anne Ratte-Polle

Dr Noak: Wilhelm Ellers

Ulrike: Cornelia Bruning

Julia: Katharina Kubel

Mrs Thalberg: Jaqueline Macaulay

Mr Thalberg: Mehdi Nebbou

## CREW

Directed by Sylvie Michel

Screenplay by Razvan Radulescu, Melissa de Raaf, Sylvie Michel

Cinematography by Mario Masini

Music by Andreas Wodraschke

Film editing by Andreas Wodraschke

Sound by Stephan Von Hase

Sound Design by Noemi Hampel, Markus Glunz

Sound mix by Lars Ginzel

Costume design by Patricia Puisy

Production design by Claus Mayr

Production: Pallas Film, Twenty Twenty Vision

Producers: Thanassis Karathanos, Karl Baumgartner